

# Fascinating INSIGHTS

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## [Amen to Moshiach](#)

Many say ברוך הוא וברוך שמו when Brachos are being recited. The Gra didn't answer ברוך הוא וברוך שמו because he was afraid he would miss an Amen. He said there are two Amens that people forget to say: One is to המחזיר, Who restores His Presence to Zion where people may respond with דרבנן without answering Amen to the Bracha. The other is הפורש סכת שלום עלינו...ועל ירושלים, Who spreads the shelter of peace upon us... and upon Yerushalayim, which we say in the Shemoneh Esrei on Friday night, where people may say ושמרו without responding with Amen. So, these Amens are to Zion and Yerushalayim. These Amens are so precious that maybe it is preventing the Geula.

Here is another interesting insight concerning ברוך הוא וברוך שמו. The followers of the false Moshiach Shabbtai Tzvi<sup>1</sup> (1626-1676) would make a special point of

proclaiming ברוך הוא וברוך שמו when reciting Brachos because the Gematria of this phrase, 814, is identical to that of the name of their leader, שבתי צבי. They wanted to remember him in their prayers. For this reason, a number of great Jewish leaders and Torah sages refrained from using this formula in order to distance themselves from the falsifiers and said ברוך הוא וברוך שמו. Although it was the custom to say ברוך הוא וברוך שמו for hundreds of years prior to Shabbtai Tzvi,<sup>2</sup> the Shabbateans apparently adapted the phrase ברוך הוא וברוך שמו omitting the ו, in order to produce the Gematria they wanted. Those who respond today with ברוך הוא וברוך שמו when hearing a Bracha should be careful to vocalize the conjunctive ו.<sup>3</sup>

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## [The Necessity Of Humility](#)

One of the prerequisites for Torah is humility. If we want to learn and live by another's law and will, we need to submit ourselves to that being. This explains why it is called קבלת התורה, the receiving of the Torah, as one must make himself humble to be a receptacle for Torah.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the Gemara<sup>5</sup> says that Torah endures only in one who makes himself as if he doesn't exist—מי שמשים עצמו כמי שאינו. The amount of Torah we receive is dependent on how humble we are. Just as the thinner the walls of a vessel are, the more it can hold, the "thinner" we make ourselves, the more Torah we can receive.<sup>6</sup> Torah is compared to water:<sup>7</sup> just as water goes into the lowest cracks, similarly one becomes a vessel for Torah when he is humble.

Where do we see that humility is needed for Torah? The mountain it was given on—the small<sup>8</sup> (humble) Har Sinai.<sup>9</sup> In fact, the word ענוה alludes to

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live mainly in Turkey today, but also in Syria (as of the year 2015). Although most have assimilated into Turkish society, there are those that wanted to remain Jewish. These people practice Shabbatian customs. One such custom is that they celebrate the Ninth of Av, rather than fasting on that day, which is a custom that began in the time of Shabbtai Tzvi because of the belief that Moshiach had already come. The followers of Shabbtai Tzvi do not believe that he actually converted to Islam. They believe that he acted outwardly as if he converted, but in secret, he maintained his Judaism. The Shabbatian' explanation for his conversion is *yerida l'tzorech aliya*, ("a descent for the purpose of ascending"). They said we first have to lower ourselves to the lowest as this is part of the Moshiach process. The Ramchal suffered greatly because of the episode of Shabbtai Tzvi since anyone who learned kabbala after that period was already suspected. There was a positive to this incident of the false Moshiach as many Jews did teshuva because they thought he was the authentic Moshiach.

<sup>2</sup> See the Tur, Orach Chaim 124.

<sup>3</sup> See the sefer Baruch She'amar from R' Baruch Halevi Epstein.

<sup>4</sup> At Har Sinai we were אחד בלב אחד united (Shemos 19:2, Rashi). Unity happens when each Jew is willing to humble himself to another. So, we see Torah connected to humility.

<sup>5</sup> Sota 21b. It has been said, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself. It is thinking of yourself less."

<sup>6</sup> R' Chaim Volozhin in Likutei Maamarim, 16 (printed in the back of Nefesh Hachaim).

<sup>7</sup> Taanis 7a. Someone once said, "Rivers and seas get their water from mountain streams because it is lower, below them. Therefore they reign over everything." The same applies to humility.

<sup>8</sup> Indeed, ענוה has an identical Gematria to סיני (when including the word itself).

<sup>9</sup> Sota 5a. See Megila 29a.

<sup>1</sup> During a short period in 1665, Shabbtai Tzvi enraptured many Jewish communities who believed he would redeem the nation of Israel and return them to their land. He had a great voice and was very charismatic. His first mistake was pronouncing the *shem hamforush* in public when there was no Beis Hamikdash. As a result of this, he was excommunicated. He then went to a different city where he convinced those there that he was Moshiach until when those attending the wedding he announced saw that he was getting married to a Sefer Torah. He left and was then arrested by the government for treason. The Ottoman Sultan, in Adrianople, Turkey, then gave him the option to be executed or convert to Islam. He chose to convert. As a result of his conversion, most of those who previously believed in him deserted him. He did however have a small group of followers that also converted to Islam. The followers of Shabbtai Tzvi that converted to Islam with him

Torah: ע which has a numerical value of 70 alludes to the 70 facets of Torah. נ (50) refers to the 50 שערי בינה (6) signifies ששה סדרי משנה (5) represents the five books of Chumash.

Who was the one who received the Torah from Hashem? Moshe, the most humble of all men.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, it is called תורת משה, the Torah of Moshe.<sup>11</sup> The Mishna states משה קבל תורה מסיני, Moshe received the Torah from Sinai.<sup>12</sup> A deeper meaning is that Moshe learned Mussar (Torah) from Har Sinai. That is, he learned from this mountain to be humble.

Torah was given in the desert as it represents humility. As someone once put it: “One must be willing to rid himself of all self-interests and must attempt to transform his inner landscape into a wilderness.”<sup>13</sup>

The Chida<sup>14</sup> writes that the Shulchan Aruch; code of Jewish law, was needed at that time in history. There were three Rabbanim that were fitting for this at that time: R’ Yosef Taitaztak,<sup>15</sup> R’ Yosef Karo and the Mahari Bar Lev. In heaven, they agreed that it should be done through R’ Yosef Karo due to his extreme humility.

One of the things R’ Akiva Eiger was known for was his legendary humility. R’ Akiva Eiger writes in one of his letters מעולם לא קראתי לתלמיד תלמידי שאיני יודע מי למד יותר ממני, I never referred to a student being my student (For example, he never wrote לכבוד תלמידי in a letter when writing to a student.) because I don’t who learned more from who. In another place, R’ Akiva Eiger writes: “Please have mercy on me. I want to give up my rabbinical position because I don’t feel I am worthy. So many Halachic questions come to me and I should be the one to decide?! Find me a job as a *shamash* (A person who assists in the running of a Shul or its religious services) in a shul somewhere (Because if he wouldn’t have a rabbinical position, he would need some other means of livelihood.)”

Rashi<sup>16</sup> tells us that although Yisro was living in a place of high honor in the world, his heart moved him to go to the desert, a מקום תהו, a place of desolation, to hear words of Torah. Another meaning is that he brought

himself to a place of ענוה (מקום תהו) in order to hear words of Torah.

With this we can understand another reason why we have the custom to eat dairy on Shavuot,<sup>17</sup> as the Gemara<sup>18</sup> tells us milk is preserved only in the most inferior of vessels. So too, Torah is retained only by one who is humble. Since Shavuot is the Yom Tov of Torah, we have the custom to eat dairy.

The Gemara informs us that the Halacha accords with Beis Hillel because they were easy and forbearing (humility).<sup>19</sup> They would study their opinion as well as Beis Shamai’s in addition to mentioning the matters of Beis Shamai before their own. This seems difficult to comprehend as because of a good trait we don’t pay attention to the truth? Why should we rule in accordance with Beis Hillel because of their character? The Chida<sup>20</sup> says that it was in the merit of their humility they got to the אמת (מכוננים אל האמת).

In the year 1812 the Chassam Sofer’s wife (He was married three times in his life, after his wives passed away.) passed away.<sup>21</sup> After some time passed, many shiduchim were posed to him, especially from wealthy and prominent people. R’ Mayer Leitersdorf, who was very wealthy, had just one daughter and was willing to give his wealth for the Chassam Sofer to be his son-in-law. At that time, a letter arrived from R’ Akiva Eiger saying his son-in-law Avraham Moshe just died, leaving his daughter a widow. Since he knew that the Chassam Sofer had many connections, he requested to find someone suitable for his daughter. The Chassam Sofer gave the letter to R’ Daniel Prossnitz (1749-1846), who was the Rosh Beis Din of Pressburg and the closest colleague and confidant of the Chassam Sofer, to find someone for the daughter of R’ Akiva Eiger. When R’ Prossnitz saw the letter he thought the Chassam Sofer himself would be the perfect match. After the shiduch was suggested the Chassam Sofer spoke to R’ Akiva Eiger about his daughter. He said what a great person she is but ended off with a caveat. Chazal<sup>22</sup> say that one should marry the daughter of a Torah scholar and I am not a Torah scholar. The Chassam Sofer humbly replied I also have to confess that I am not a Torah scholar and the Gemara<sup>23</sup> says one should take a Torah scholar for his daughter in marriage. The shiduch went through and the Chassam Sofer married R’ Akiva Eiger’s daughter.

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R’ Mordechai Friedlander ztz”l for close to five years. He received semicha from R’ Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz”l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of the books, *Fascinating Insights and Incredible Insights* in addition to being the host of *The Fascinating Insights Podcast*. His writings inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

<sup>10</sup> Bamidbar 12:3. After all that Moshe did in the desert, Korach now rebels. What is Moshe’s response? That if Korach continues this way he will destroy himself. As a result ויפל על פניו, Moshe fell on his face—he Davens for Korach (Bamidbar 16:3,4)! What humility!

<sup>11</sup> As in Malachi 3:22. The fact that Moshe’s burial place is unknown is the seal of his self-effacement.

<sup>12</sup> Avos 1:1. A wise man once pointed out that the word “someone” can be understood as if you are some of the one (ה’ אחד), as we are a חלק אלו-ה, ממעל, piece of Hashem [Lyov 31:2]), then you truly are a someone!

<sup>13</sup> Talking of humility, let us cite the words of the Chofetz Chaim (Hakdama to Likutai Halachos on Kodshim): He writes וכן אנכי השפל והעני יודע הלכה אחת על בריו ואין לי מצוה אחת בשלמותה... so too I who am so low and poor in good deeds that I don’t know even one Halacha perfectly and I don’t even have one Mitzva in total שלימות as we are commanded from Hashem.

<sup>14</sup> Shem Hagdolim, Maareches Sefarim, ערך ב, נט אות, ערך ב.

<sup>15</sup> His students include the Alshich, R’ Shlomo Alkebetz and the Maharashdam. The Reishis Chochma, who was a student of the Arizal, writes (Shaar Hakedusha) that for 40 years R’ Yosef Taitaztak didn’t sleep in a bed except for Shabbos and when he slept his feet were suspended while he laid on a box. He would arise at Chatzos. Nobody knew about this conduct until he died, when his wife revealed this.

<sup>16</sup> Shemos 18:5.

<sup>17</sup> Orach Chaim 494:3. A hint to this custom is that חלב has a Gematria of 40, the number of days Moshe went to heaven to receive the Torah. Another allusion is where it talks about the Shavuot offering in בשבעתיכם לה’ משנה חדשה לה’ חלב, new meal-offering to Hashem (Bamidbar 28:26), where the initials spell חלב.

<sup>18</sup> Taanis 7a.

<sup>19</sup> Eruvin 13b.

<sup>20</sup> Kisei Dovid, p. 102. Bnei Yissoschar, Sivan 6:1. See Shabbos 104a.

<sup>21</sup> See Shu”t Chassam Sofer, Yoreh Deah, 153.

<sup>22</sup> Pesachim 49a.

<sup>23</sup> Pesachim 49a.