

CROWNED WITH HUMILITY

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

"And the man, Moshe, was extremely humble, more than any man on the face of the earth." [12:3]

The Rizhiner Rebbe, R' Yisrael, contrasts this description of Moshe with that of King Solomon, who was described as more wise than any person. It is obvious, he says, that Shlomo HaMelech must also have been just as humble as Moshe. A wise person cannot be haughty -- any trace of haughtiness is foolishness, and a contradiction to wisdom! In accordance with his tremendous wisdom, he must have been equally humble.

Similarly, the Rebbe says that Moshe must also have been wiser than anyone alive, although praised for his great humility. Someone on the incredible level of Moshe could not achieve that sort of humility without tremendous wisdom. In accordance with his humility, he must have been equally wise.

If so, it turns out that both were exceedingly wise, and both were exceedingly humble. This being the case, why was Moshe praised for humility, and King Solomon, for wisdom?

The Rizhiner Rebbe explains as follows: there is a law that one must honor a Rabbi. One must stand up when a Rabbi enters the room, escort a Rabbi on the road, etc. There is a similar law to honor a King; Maimonides says at the beginning of the Laws of Kings, Chapter 2: "we do not ride on his horse, we do not sit in his chair, we do not use his sceptre, his crown, or any of his official vestments."

There is a crucial difference, however. If a Rabbi "forgives" the honor due him, then it is forgiven. But a King cannot yield the honor due him; he must be honored in any case.

Moshe was Rabbi and teacher to all of Israel. Since he was the Rabbi, he was able to yield the honor due him, and conduct himself with the utmost humility. For this reason, his "crowning glory" was his tremendous humility. Shlomo HaMelech, however, could not yield the honor due him, and always be humble. This is why he is praised for his wisdom. Indeed, concludes the Rebbe, this required tremendous wisdom -- to demand honor on the "outside," and to act with all the power and strength of a King, yet, on the inside, remain tremendously humble!

For it takes humility to be wise, and it takes wisdom to be humble...

Good Shabbos,

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