



## **Shavuot 2023**

### **Humility Redux**

2 minute read | Straightforward

We take for granted that humility is an admirable virtue, but it's worth taking a moment to consider what humility is and also what it is not.

Humility is commonly understood to mean a low estimate of oneself and one's accomplishments. The Oxford English Dictionary defines humility as "the quality of being humble: having a low estimate of one's importance, worthiness, or merits."

But this doesn't ring true with what Judaism teaches us about the value of humility.

The Midrash famously teaches that Mount Sinai was only a little mountain to show how instrumental humility is.

But suppose the educational purpose of giving the Torah in such a place is to illustrate the value of humility. In that case, you'd assume a valley would be a more appropriate geological feature to teach the lesson!

So why give the Torah on a mountain at all?

The Shem Mi'Shmuel states that to accept the Torah and live its ideals, you must be like a mountain, not a valley; or as Pirkei Avos puts it, if I don't stand up for myself, what am I?

As important as the quality of humility is, people who accept the Torah upon themselves must consider themselves important and deserving of the Torah.

R' Jonathan Sacks teaches that humility is an appreciation of our talents, skills, and virtues. It is not meekness or self-deprecating thought but the dedication of oneself to something higher.

R' Shlomo Farhi notes that the Torah labels Moshe as the most humble of all men. If humility is simply a low view of oneself, then Moshe, the Lawgiver and single most significant authority on the Torah, would meekly cave to any challenge – which he obviously couldn't and didn't. But if humility is about being of service, then Moshe truly was the most humble of all men – Moshe singularly dedicated his entire life to public service. His achievements were never about him or his status; they were all in furtherance of rescuing and building the Jewish people.



It was no lack of humility for Moshe to acknowledge his authority and leadership. When a person believes they are nothing, the Torah itself will ultimately have little effect in elevating him. Although pride is a dangerous vice in large quantities, a small amount is still essential to living a good life.

Pride is about competing – that you are more intelligent than or richer than others; humility is about serving. Humility isn't the opposite of narcissism and hubris; it's the lack of them. In the absence of pride, you find humility, which sees no need for competition.

So perhaps humility is not that you are nothing; it's just that it's not about you anymore. In humility, you are no more and no less than other people. Humility is not about hiding away, becoming a wallflower or a doormat; it is about the realization that your abilities and actions are uncorrelated to others.

Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.

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## **A Legendary Relationship**

2 minute read | Straightforward

Midrashim are cryptic and often misunderstood. They are metaphors and literary devices that encode perspectives on how Chazal understood stories in the Torah.

One popular Midrash teaches that before Creation, God approached every nation and offered them the Torah. Each nation responded to the offer with an inquiry into what they were signing up for and declined the Torah for one reason or another until God offered it to the Jewish People, who accepted without reservation.

But what's wrong with asking what you're signing up for?

The Midrash is probably not talking about some metaphysical racial superiority or that Jews aren't afraid of sin. We can speculate which answer might have turned them off if they had only asked; perhaps the response might have been about business ethics or gossip, and they'd decline the Torah just the same as anyone else!

R' Chaim Brown explains that the Midrash is about something else entirely – relationships.

If you get a call from an unknown number, and the caller claims he has the deal of a lifetime for you, but you need to send all the money right now, you'd have many questions to ask. Healthy natural skepticism should give rise to many sensible questions, like, who are you? How did you get my number? What's the deal? And crucially, what are the terms?



Before you agree to anything, it is reasonable to ask what you're getting yourself into. If you are used to accepting the Terms and Conditions without reading and signing anything without review, you shouldn't!

So the Midrash probably isn't speaking about a defect in the nations who ask the question; the question is eminently fair and reasonable – “what will this Torah require of me?”

But now, what if it's not an unknown caller; consider that it's your parent, sibling, or favorite cousin on the phone. They are launching a new venture imminently, but you can join if you send the money immediately.

Sure, there are risks – and you shouldn't make any financial decisions this way! – but in the context of the love and trust of a close relationship, you don't have the same kind of questions, and your natural skepticism is muted.

That's what the Midrash is about.

When our Father in Heaven offers us the deal, all the obligations are worthwhile to be in business together.

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## **Never Give Up**

3 minute read | Straightforward

On the holiday of Shavuot, it is customary to read the Book of Ruth, a story set in the harvest season with a vivid depiction of one woman's unwavering commitment to Judaism, thematically echoing our own renewed dedication to our faith during this period.

The story is about a family's unrelenting stream of adversity and setbacks and Naomi and Ruth's attempts at navigating them. Ruth faces a series of formidable challenges: she must reconcile her Moabite roots with her newfound Jewish identity, depart from her homeland with no intention of return, cope with the death of her husband, grapple with the loss of her fortune, establish herself in a foreign land, struggle with poverty while seeking food and provisions, and finally, present herself to Boaz.

Each of these challenges would have been independently formidable. Yet, Ruth faced them all in succession, compounding their severity and making success not just improbable but nearly impossible. Some of these were especially hard because widowed women are a vulnerable class, especially in that era.



We experience only one outcome, but risk means many other potential future outcomes could have come to pass. We ought to recognize the essential nature of challenges; not every person can overcome every hurdle they face. Everyone's journey is unique, colored by their personal circumstances, resources, and strengths, and we ought not to judge when people cannot surmount the difficult obstacles in their lives. Far better to hope that life never rolls the dice against you than to believe everything will just work out.

Despite her significant loss and her daunting transitions, Ruth did not surrender to despair or choose the easier path. She consciously decided to persist, adapt, and carve her path forward. Remarkably, amidst all the uncertainty and hardship, Ruth's journey ultimately led her to a place of security and belonging, and everything sort of worked out in the end.

R' Shlomo Freifeld teaches that this is the most important lesson the Book of Ruth has to offer; to never give up hope, to believe that there is some kind of order or plan to the universe, and that everything will work out in the end.

The notion that one must never give up is an empowering message, a testament to human resilience, hope, and the transformative potential of perseverance. Ruth's story speaks of an individual who, against all odds, chose not to give up. She held on steadfastly, not just to her own survival, but to her commitment to her mother-in-law, Naomi, her new faith, and her new people. Her persistence eventually led her to Boaz, establishing her as an important figure in Jewish history and a founder of the House of King David.

But never giving up doesn't mean what you think.

Ruth gives up a lot, nearly everything in fact.

Ruth gives up her identity as a Moabite woman, a princess, her ancestral beliefs, her safety and comfort, and the person she was and might have been. In giving up these aspects, Ruth doesn't stubbornly stick to an old path that doesn't serve her. Rather, she undergoes a transformative journey, embracing new alignments and beliefs that reflect her authentic self more accurately; she forges a new path with courage and determination. Her resilience is nuanced; it's not about resisting change but embracing it.

In other words, she gives up on plenty; but she never gives up on herself.

People rigidly stick to jobs, places, and relationships that don't work because they don't want to give up. But as one writer put it, you can never cure structural defects; the system corrects itself by collapsing. Failure is not a dead-end; it is a necessary precursor to building something stronger and more aligned that can ultimately survive.

There are moments the universe calls us to venture into the unknown, endure the trials that come our way, and persist until we reach our own growth and transformation.

Like Ruth, there are some things you should be happy to give up and let go of, but like Ruth, never give up on yourself or your values.

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## **Slept In At Sinai**

3 minute read | Straightforward

Have you ever overslept for something important?

That early morning wakeup for the final exam, to catch a flight to the long-awaited vacation or the big wedding day.

For most people, it's pretty hard to oversleep the morning of anything important; it's hard to get any sleep on the eve of such anticipated moments. The anxiety that keeps you up is the same anxiety that gets you straight out of bed.

And yet, our sages teach us that that's precisely what happened to the Jewish People camped at the foot of Mount Sinai; they had been eagerly awaiting Moshe's return with the Ten Commandments, the culminating moment of Creation, and they overslept.

This anecdote is one of the sources of the treasured custom of staying up the night of Shavuos immersed in Torah study. When the Creator offers you a piece of eternity, so the thinking goes, who really needs to sleep? If you knew tomorrow was the second coming of the Creator or Moshiach, you wouldn't be getting any sleep. And yet, the Jewish People and humanity's spiritual awakening starts with a snooze.

Let's remember that in this multitude of millions of men, women, and children who overslept is the litany of greats and sages who appear in the Torah. Miriam, Elazar, Itamar, Nadav, Avihu, Pinchas, Caleb, the tribal chiefs, and the sages.

How did everyone oversleep?

The Arugas HaBosem suggests that our intuition that such a thing doesn't happen naturally is correct; it was a supernatural slumber, the kind the Creator sets on the first man – וַיִּפֹּל ה' אֱלֹהִים תְּרִדְמָה עַל־הָאָדָם – וַיִּישָׁן.

R' Meilech Biderman teaches that the Creator deliberately establishes the archetype of Torah at Sinai precisely this way, establishing for all generations that you can be late, tired, and still half asleep, but still be invited and expected to attend Mount Sinai.

You might think you're not ready, you might truly be unready, but readiness isn't a requirement.



But their unreadiness wasn't simply an internal function of tiredness or lack of preparation. When they woke and showed up at the foot of the mountain, they encountered an external environment shrouded in darkness and fog – עָרָפֶל / עָנָן / חֹשֶׁךְ.

The darkness and fog over Sinai are the uncertainty, mystery, and awe that often accompany profound spiritual experiences, but the Chiddushei HaRim highlights how this is not just a possible feature of our spiritual experience or an obstacle to overcome; it is an integral feature and part of the essential nature of the work we are called to do. The mountain was obscured in the way the path of our spiritual journey is often obscured. But they showed up just the same.

In a world where it's all too easy to feel distant or disconnected from our heritage, our spirituality, or even from each other, the act of showing up can be a profound statement of commitment and engagement. The Jewish people overslept, but they still showed up to receive the Torah. They were there, ready to engage and participate, even if they were not perfectly prepared. We, too, can show up and engage with our spirituality, even in the face of uncertainty and mystery.

The people showed up despite oversleeping, and when they did, the mountain was obscured. Both teachings reject the notion of being perfectly prepared or fully awake to engage. They suggest that the act of engagement itself, of showing up, is valuable and meaningful, even if we are not perfectly prepared.

Uncertainty and mystery are often part of our spiritual journeys. We may not always feel fully prepared or awake. We may feel unsure, lost, tired, or even afraid. But the act of showing up, of being present and ready to engage, is the first and most important step towards connection, meaning, and growth.

And it's enough.

You might be late to the party, but you're still invited.

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## **Love's Truest Language**

3 minute read | Straightforward

When we think of Mount Sinai, we think of Divine Revelation and all that it means. But apart from the obvious upheaval in spiritual terms, the Torah also describes a great upheaval in physical terms.

In Tanach, whenever there is a theophany, some manifestation of the divine in a tangible, observable way, there is an upending of the natural order. Moshe saw a burning bush that wasn't consumed; the Jews were led through the desert by pillars of fiery clouds. Sinai itself is characterized by fire from the sky, along with loud booms, thunder, and lightning, and the whole mountain quaked, enveloped in a



haze of dark clouds and smoke. Our Sages even suggest that when people heard God's Word emerge from the darkness, they died for an instant.

This imagery demonstrates the absolute abnegation of the natural world, and rightly so!

Arguably, the ultimate purpose behind creation was to cultivate a conduit that could receive the Torah; all of existence culminated at that moment at Sinai, and creation achieved its intended goal when God reached into the universe to give the Torah to humanity, forming an intimate bond between Creator and creation. It follows that the imagery is stark and unnatural; this is the most extraordinary and supernatural event in human experience!

But there's one part that doesn't fit at all.

Among all the intimidating and scary goings-on, something else happened at Mount Sinai too. The little mountain in the desert burst into bloom, with beautiful plants and fragrant flowers sprawling up the hills and into the cloud, so tantalizing that the Jews had to be instructed to restrain their animals from grazing the lush greenery!

But why were there flowers on Mount Sinai at all?

R' Shlomo Farhi explains that the flowers demonstrate something that darkness, earthquakes, fire, thunder, and lightning do not. Those things demonstrate God's power, but flowers illustrate God's love.

There is another famous mountain in our tradition, Mount Moriah, where Avraham and Yitzchak famously stood together, the mountain on which the two Temples stood and where a third will stand once more. This famous mountain was also associated with flowers; the Zohar suggests that the mountain was named Moriah after the fragrant myrrh that grew there.

The legendary mountain is not named for the heroic acts and great deeds that took place there; it's not the Mountain of the Akeida, the Mountain of Commitment and Faith, or the Mountain of Sacrifice. It's named for the sweet-smelling plants that grew there!

There is an entire genre of romance that hugely impacts how many of us conceptualize love and relationships; a grand gesture is usually the crescendo of a great love story. Yet, as R' Shlomo Farhi teaches, a grand gesture or great sacrifice cannot define a relationship because it is only ever an anomaly.

Over time, love is communicated through many little things, not any particular one-time thing. What defines the quality of a relationship isn't the great deeds here and there; it's the small gestures, the consistent, subtle, and thoughtful acts that shape how a couple connects and interacts. These small gestures send powerful signals about who we are, what we care about, and why we do what we do.



It's called Mount Moriah because God wanted it to smell nice for all the great heroes and future pilgrims who would one day make their way there. It was wholly unnecessary, completely irrelevant, and entirely beside the main point of anything of consequence, but that's why it matters so much. The great epic of Avraham's ordeal is not impacted even slightly by the fact that God made it smell nice, but God did it anyway.

The flowers on the mountains are the most trivial detail, with nothing whatsoever to do with the tremendous meaning and significance of the events that took place at Sinai or Moriah. Still, those flowers say more than any commotion, and that's the part that we remember. To this day, when we celebrate the Torah we got at Sinai, we don't commemorate the darkness by turning out the lights or the earthquakes by shaking the tables; Shavuot is the festival of flowers! For centuries, it has been a near-universal custom to decorate our homes and shul with beautiful flower arrangements.

An employee will give you whatever you ask for, but a lover will give you everything they can. It's not about doing what you need to do; it's about doing all you can. That slight change in orientation elevates small and insignificant gestures into the most meaningful and loving relationship-affirming rituals.

Are you giving all you can to the ones you love?

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## **Holding Us Over a Barrel**

4 minute read | Straightforward

The moment God gave the Torah at Sinai is probably the most important in the Torah. It might be the most crucial moment in the history of creation. To take it even further, cultivating a channel to receive the Torah might even be the reason for existence itself.

Given the significance of this moment, it should come as no surprise that the Midrashic literature likens Sinai to a wedding ceremony and makes extensive use of the imagery of love and marriage, demonstrating the powerful bond of commitment between God and the Jewish People, characterized by the all-important unanimous and unconditional acceptance of the Torah – *בְּעֵשָׂה וְנִשְׁמָע*.

However, there is another imagery our sages utilize. The Gemara imagines a scene where God lifts and holds Mount Sinai over the gathered crowd and tells them that if they accept the Torah, all will be well, and if not, they will meet an early grave there and then – *שְׂכַפָּה הַקֶּב"ה עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת הַהָר כְּגִיגִית*.

This visual contrasts starkly with the predominant and prevailing imagery that the Jewish People threw their enthusiastic consent behind accepting the Torah and its precepts. To engage the language of the metaphor, the bride loved the groom, and everything was agreed upon and resolved. Once the





relationship had been firmly established on a bedrock of love and trust, the imagery of coercion and force seems entirely unnecessary, if not an outright oxymoron.

If the Jewish People were eager and willing to accept the Torah, why do our sages use the motif of coercive force at all?

The Baal Shem Tov acknowledges this idealized romantic view; the beginning of most relationships can be characterized by butterflies and excitement, feelings of elation and joy. But, as anyone who has experienced a mature relationship can attest, eventually, there comes a day when the good vibes and pleasant feelings aren't quite there; if the relationship is going to succeed, it needs more than good vibes alone – many relationships fail for not comprehending this notion in its fullness. A successful relationship requires its constituents to maintain the relationship in the moments that don't feel so good.

The imagery of holding a mountain over the audience is not a literal death threat – the metaphor describes God imploring the audience that this is serious stuff. If that seems so obvious now, it wasn't readily obvious in the moment. Up to that point, being on God's team had been pretty cool and fun – they watched waves of supernatural plagues smite their oppressors; saw a literal ocean split and dry up to escape then obliterate the most powerful military force in the known world; ate magical food from the sky; drank from magic wellsprings in the desert; while protected day and night by miracle clouds that lit up the dark and followed them wherever they went. It's not so hard to guess which side you'd want to be on! But that's not really what accepting the yoke of Torah means or looks like in any material way, so God warns the people that this is a serious undertaking. As the Maharal explains, the Torah can not only be accepted for the glorious moments. It's like the unspoken part of a young couple getting married; no one wants to tell them, and they probably aren't even equipped to hear it yet, but they have their work cut out to make it work. It's a lifelong undertaking that will require an enormous amount of investment and sacrifice if they are to have a chance at happiness. They'll probably learn that lesson for themselves – the hard way.

It's not that the Gemara imagines God threatening to slaughter the Jewish People; it's a warning about what was at stake and how much it mattered. It's a comment on the naivete of thinking that the imagery of a happy wedding could ever be enough to make a relationship work. The happy beginning is an essential starting point of any relationship, but the relationship can only ever be superficial if that's all there is. What the Torah demands from us is a serious commitment – the part that is not easy. It's not all sunshine, rainbows, and redemption – the blood-soaked pages of Jewish history speak for themselves.

R' Shlomo Farhi suggests that the Gemara explicitly teaches this lesson by employing imagery of a barrel, a hollow object that confines and traps its contents instead of, say, a hammer or blunt instrument which would be used to flatten. The antidote to the immaturity of the excitement of happy beginnings is recognizing that there are times when commitment feels like being trapped. It's true of relationships, and it's true of religion. There's a moment we feel called and seen, and a moment we feel invisible and ignored; the things that can make it wonderful are part of what can make it so hard.



There's no such thing as picking and choosing part of a person, or part of the Torah, for some of the time. It just doesn't work that way.

But while it's well and good to suggest the lesson of forceful imagery is to teach us the seriousness of the subject matter, it is almost universally understood that agreements entered into under coercion are not binding – we would never enforce a contract signed at gunpoint. Based on this intuitive reasoning, the Gemara questions the imagery of coercion and wonders if it compromises, if not entirely undermines, the basis of accepting the Torah – taking the imagery of the metaphor at face value, we wouldn't be partners with God; we'd be victims! The Gemara responds that to the extent this is a serious question, the Purim story remedied this because the Jewish People accepted the Torah anew entirely of their own volition – קיימו מה שקיבלו כבר.

R' Jonathan Sacks observes that the Gemara concludes what we know intuitively – you cannot teach something that matters through coercion; you cannot impose truth by force. Even if God were to try, it simply doesn't work like that. We can only say that people accept ideas and beliefs to the extent people can freely choose and embrace them.

As important and exciting as the moment captured at Sinai was, the wedding is not the relationship. The people who stood there that day lacked context – the bigger picture that accepting the Torah fits into. After the Purim story, the people learned that lesson the hard way. With this mature understanding, they could freely accept what had been accepted so long ago with newfound and hard-won insight.

A lack of problems cannot be the bedrock of a great relationship; it will only ever become great when its participants are invested enough to weather and work through complex issues.

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## **Killing Envy**

5 minute read | Straightforward

If you had to sit in a room for a month and compile a top ten list of Judaism's most important concepts, most people would probably come out with something that looks like the Ten Commandments.

We'd probably start with the notion that there is a Creator and not to betray faith in the Creator by taking God's name lightly or praying to other deities. We'd all agree that humans should not kill other humans. Most of us would agree on the importance of observing Shabbos, which honors the Creator and the natural order of Creation, acknowledging the bounds of human creativity in space and time. We'd probably agree on the value of respecting our parents and honoring the people who raised us.



These laws are intuitive; they make sense – we understand why these are some of the most essential things the Creator has to say to humans.

But then there's one that probably wouldn't spring to mind for most people:

וְלֹא תִקְמַד אִשָּׁת רֵעֶךָ. וְלֹא תִתְאַנֶּה בֵּית רֵעֶךָ שְׂדֵהוּ וְעַבְדוֹ וְאִמְתּוֹ שׂוֹרוֹ וְחִמְרוֹ וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר לְרֵעֶךָ – You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not crave your neighbor's house, or his field, or his male or female slave, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's. (5:18)

Coveting. Envy. Jealousy. Wanting.

Is warning us off jealousy one of the most important things God has to say to humanity?

It's on the list, so we can conclude that the answer to that question is yes, and that we ought to consider why.

The destructiveness of murder and theft are obvious, as they utterly disregard the autonomy and integrity of other humans and their rights to life and property. But the destructiveness of envy and jealousy are deceptively subtle in comparison because it seems so harmless. It's a victimless crime – who are you hurting?

Perhaps it's precisely that line of thinking that allows it to slip under our radars stealthily, and we should be concerned because, in reality, there is a victim of jealousy, and you haven't noticed because it isn't someone else – it's you.

Envy suffocates you and slowly poisons your soul. Anger and hatred are occasionally justified – some things should not be tolerated and require our outrage to prompt decisive action. We should hate Nazis, and we should get angry when they march in public and express their ugliness; we then need to send them scurrying back to the dark crevasses they crawled out of.

Our Sages allow a very narrow form of jealousy towards someone highly accomplished. But even then, our Sages only permit a positive and productive form of action-oriented jealousy, where you use it as fuel to motivate you to raise your game and match their efforts. Are those excellent qualities replicable? Practice them, and you, too, can have those qualities. The unspoken premise here is that our Sages take it as a given that you cannot expect to be worthy of an equal opportunity to participate in the accomplishment without putting in the same effort that someone else did. This conception does not allow for armchair envy and everyday jealousy; you cannot expect to achieve your targets without paying your dues and putting in the work.

On the other hand, simple jealousy is the ultimate manifestation of entitlement, laziness, and a scarcity mindset – that there's not enough of something to go around, so if others have it, it means you can't. It's a mentality that creates a landscape of fear, and the world descends into a cutthroat competition of survival of the fittest, a vile manifestation of social Darwinism. It might be the nastiest emotion we can have!



But unless we're invoking envy to do better, it isn't just a dangerous sin; it's a stupid sin as well because it's one of the only ones you could never possibly enjoy. It's a severe hidden drawback to how we live today, with unlimited information at our fingertips, stoking feelings of inadequacy and jealousy by comparing what we have with the thin slice we see of other people's lives. All pain, no gain, and yet we wonder what the harm is!

You pass the test but compare yourself to the best student in class, without knowing they haven't met their friends for six months. You work long and difficult hours and compare yourself to the guy in the neighborhood who just made a fortune without knowing that his firm is under investigation and he is in serious jeopardy. You marry a complete human with flaws but compare them to people on social media in the top 1% of looks, smarts, or wealth without seeing their multiple flaws. You buy a house and discover issues but compare it to the nicest house on the block without knowing that the foundation is weak and needs to be torn down. Does any of this sound uncomfortably familiar?

So sure, maybe we know that envy is terrible, but you can't just change the way you feel, so what can we do, practically speaking?

Firstly, let's read the words.

“Do not kill” and “Do not steal” are simple two-word instructions, and we understand that we are to apply them broadly and generally. Unlike those and several others, envy, the one that doesn't spring to mind as quickly, is spelled out in explicit detail, with seven specific hypotheticals before the general rule.

Maybe it would be too hard to prohibit jealousy because we can't just stop feeling the way we feel. But God doesn't just tell us not to be jealous – God tells us how to avoid it entirely. Don't be jealous of this in particular; don't be jealous of that – וְחָמְרוּ / שׂוּרוּ / וְאַמְתּוּ / וְעַבְדּוּ / שְׂדֵהוּ / בֵּית רֵעֵךְ – you can't cherry-pick certain aspects of someone else's life. To have what they have, you'd have to be them, so, as the Sfas Emes notes, if you are going to be jealous of someone, you must be willing to swap your entire life for theirs – וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְרֵעֵךְ.

Or in other words, if you're seeing someone's highlight reel, remember that you can't correctly judge the whole by a part.

But secondly, and more fundamentally, we need to reorganize how we see the world and remind ourselves that God's blessings are not finite. There isn't a fixed amount of happiness, health, love, or money in the world, so it's not a zero-sum game. Someone else's good fortune cannot subtract from yours and cannot diminish the pool of blessings available to you in the future. His is his – אֲשֶׁר לְרֵעֵךְ – and yours is yours, and we need to respect that boundary down to the smallest detail scrupulously. God's blessings are abundant, not scarce. The Ibn Ezra suggests that the practice of this law requires that you refine yourself to have no interest in what is not meant for you.



## TorahRedux

As our Sages guided us, who is wealthy? One who celebrates and takes joy in what he has – אֵיזֶהוּ עָשִׂיר, הַשֵּׂמֶחַ בְּהַלְקוֹ. One interpretation even inverts the plain reading, from celebrating what you have to celebrating what he has – בְּהַלְקוֹ. We should take this sage wisdom to heart, kill the scarcity mindset, and cultivate an abundance mentality. Someone else's prosperity and success don't make your own any less likely, so be happy when someone else wins because yours is no further away.

So perhaps warning us against envy is one of the most important things God has to say to us; it might be the sin with the highest destructiveness to innocence ratio. It withholds you from your highest consciousness and prevents you from being you in all your fullness; it stops you from being happy and limits your ability to embrace your blessings.

So don't look at your neighbor to see if you have as much as them; the only time you should look at what your neighbor has is to ensure they have enough.

No person has the power to have everything they want, but it is within everyone's power not to want what they don't have and to cheerfully put what they do have to good use.

While you can't have everything you want, it's such a blessing to want what you have.

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*I present TorahRedux l'ilui nishmas my late grandfather, HaGaon HaRav Yehuda Leib Gertner ben HaRav HaChassid Menachem Mendel.*

*I hope you enjoyed this week's thoughts. If you have questions or comments, or just want to say hello, it's a point of pride for me to hear from you, and I'll always respond. And if you saw, heard, read, or watched anything that spoke to you, please send it my way - [Neli@TorahRedux.com](mailto:Neli@TorahRedux.com).*

*If you liked this week's edition of TorahRedux, why not share it with friends and family who would appreciate it?*

Neli

**PS** - *TorahRedux is my pride and joy, the product of thousands of hours of learning, research, writing, editing, and formatting. I have been blessed to operate a business that allows me to dedicate a substantial amount of time to TorahRedux, and I welcome your assistance in furthering my goal to keep publishing high-quality Parsha content that makes a difference. I broker healthcare businesses for sale; I kindly ask for your blessings and prayers, and introductions to anyone who might want to buy or sell a healthcare business!*

**Redux:** *adjective* – resurgence; refers to being brought back, restored, or revived; something familiar presented in a new way. Not to see what no one else has seen, but to say what nobody has yet said about something which everybody sees.