



# Ohr Somayach Light Lines

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## Light Insight

### Staying Lit

“Aaron did so;” (*Numbers 8:3*)

“This teaches the praise of Aaron — that he did not change” (*Sifri*).

**Y**ou pick up your new car from the dealer, and settle yourself behind the ergonomic dash, the smell of “new car” wafting across your nostrils, more delectable than any French perfume. The engine purrs as you ease your way in to light traffic along the coast. “This car is great!” you think to yourself, “It’s the most exciting thing in the world!”

Two months later, someone sees you and says, “Great new car!” You reply, “Yeah, I guess so. Actually it’s not so new anymore...”

If familiarity doesn’t exactly breed contempt, at least it fosters boredom and complacency. Yet at the end of his life, Aaron was still lighting the menorah with exactly the same degree of constancy and

enthusiasm with which he lit it on his first day.

“This teaches the praise of Aaron — that he did not change.”

### Make Space

“And the man Moses was more humble than anyone on the face of the earth.”

(*Numbers 12:3*).

**T**he thinner the walls of a container, the less they intrude into the space inside the container, and thus the greater its capacity. Moses made himself like the skin of a garlic clove — virtually without substance — the absolute minimum for him to still exist in this world. Thus, he was almost completely a “containing space.”

It is for this reason that he was able to receive and contain the Torah in its perfection. In truth, if there were anyone today who would reach his level of humility, that person too would receive the Torah in all its completeness, like Moses.

### Cashing In

“And the man Moses was more humble than anyone on the face of the earth.”

(*Numbers 12:3*)

**O**ur Sages warn against haughtiness, more than any other character defect. “Be very, very humble,” they teach us. What makes haughtiness and status-seeking so mortally dangerous?

A person cannot receive the true reward for a mitzvah in this world; since a mitzvah is spiritual, it is impossible for its reward to be given in a world which is physical. However, if a person derives status and honor from doing a mitzvah, even though this honor is illusory, he has nevertheless received a kind of recompense, since status and honor are felt as “spiritual” entities. Thus, by deriving a surrogate benefit from the counterfeit currency of honor in this world, a person can arrive at the First National Bank of the World to Come, and find that he exchanged his priceless diamonds — the eternal reward for his mitzvot — for Monopoly money.

## LOVE of the LAND

*Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel*

### Hosting the Divine Presence

**T**he most sacred part of the Beit Hamikdash was located in the portion of Eretz Israel belonging to the Tribe of Binyamin (*Mesechta Yoma 12a*).

Why, ask our Sages (*Mechilta Yitro 4:18*), did Binyamin merit to be the host of the Divine Presence? Because only he, of all the sons of Yaakov, was born in Eretz Israel.

When his fellow Jews challenged Mordechai on his endangering their

security by refusing to bow to Haman, he responded that it was below his dignity to bow to any mortal, even one as politically powerful as Haman, because of the royal status he enjoyed as the descendant of Binyamin who was born in Eretz Israel. (*Midrash Rabbah Esther 7:8*)

## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

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Giving people the benefit of the doubt

*Few, if any, escape being misjudged at one time or another. Everyone seems to get a turn to be wrongly blamed. In the following story, it was...*

### *A Turn for the Nurse*

**M**y mother was hospitalized here in Jerusalem with a broken hip. She only spoke English and was hard of hearing. Her hands trembled and she was disoriented. I explained her situation to the nurses, explaining that she needed assistance

eating. I asked them to please feed her breakfast until I could arrive the next morning.

At 11 the next morning I arrived to find her breakfast tray on her nightstand, untouched. Didn't they understand the message I had so clearly detailed, that she needed assistance eating?

Not wanting to antagonize the nurses, I walked slowly towards the desk trying to decide how to best broach the issue.

Just then, one of the nurses came towards me, saying: "Your mother came up a half hour ago from a procedure. We were waiting for her to calm down before feeding her." And she ran ahead, into the room to warm up the farina.

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## Response Line

### Courage & Cowardice

Smile <smile1940@aol.com>  
wrote:

*In the Torah, where can I find a definition of courage?*

Dear Smile,

The best place to go to get an answer to this question is the Mishna in Pirkei Avot: Ben Zoma said: "Who is a strong person? Someone who subdues his evil inclination, as we find expressed in the verse: 'Someone who doesn't lose his temper is better than a strong man, and someone who controls his spirit is better than someone who conquers a city.' "

The Mishna is describing a trait that applies only to people:

Courage. Animals exhibit physical strength. But courage, spiritual strength, only applies to people.

Physical talent can be developed, but the potential is basically inborn. Either you have the potential to play professional basketball or you don't. The basic talent must be there.

But when it comes to spiritual strength, everyone has the same opportunity to excel. Wherever you stand spiritually, there is a challenge. Though some people, due to place of birth, education, etc., would seem to have it easier, in actuality each person has his own tests which are perfect for him.

An amazing story is recorded about Rabbi Chaim Vital (16th century) and the Arizal (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria). The Arizal was

the great teacher of Kabbala in modern times. Rabbi Chaim Vital was his primary student, who recorded almost all of the Arizal's teachings. Once Rabbi Vital asked the Arizal the following question: "If the Talmudic Sages with all their greatness and levels of holiness weren't able to bring the *mashiach* (messianic era), then how are we going to be able to?"

The Arizal's answer is even more understandable today than it was then. He answered: "In the time before the *mashiach* it will be so challenging to correctly observe *mitzvot* that the *mitzvot* done in those times will have more power than they did in the earlier times. Even though those *mitzvot* may not be done as completely, but because they will be so difficult they will have the power to bring the *mashiach*."