Humility

Numbers 12:1

And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Kushite woman whom he had married; for he had married a Kushite woman.

2. And they said, Has the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? has he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it.

3. And the man Moses was very humble, more than any other men, which were upon the face of the earth.

4. And the Lord spoke suddenly to Moses, and to Aaron, and to Miriam, Come out you three to the Tent of Meeting. And the three came out.

5. And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the Tent, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forth.

6. And he said, Hear now my words; If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision, and will speak to him in a dream.

7. Not so with my servant Moses, for he is the trusted one in all my house.

8. With him I speak mouth to mouth, manifestly, and not in dark speech; and he behold the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

9. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed.

YOUR TORAH NAVIGATOR

1. In this context, define what anav (humble) means.

2. What does Moshe’s being anav explain in this context?

3. Do you think that Moshe should be applauded for not speaking up for himself?

Proverbs 22:4

ANaVa (humility) is followed by fear of God, wealth and honor and life.
Our Rabbis taught: A man should always be humble like Hillel, and not impatient like Shammasi. It once happened that two men made a wager with each other, saying, He who goes and makes Hillel angry shall receive four hundred zuz. Said one, I will go and incense him. That day was the Sabbath eve, and Hillel was washing his head. He went and passed by the door of his house, and called out, Is Hillel here, is Hillel here? Thereupon he robed and went out to him, saying, My son, what do you require? I have a question to ask, said he. Ask, my son, he promptly. Thereupon he asked: Why are the heads of the Babylonians round? My son, you have asked a great question, replied he: because they have no skillful midwives. He departed, tarried a while, returned, and called
out, Is Hillel here? Is Hillel here? He robed and went out to him, saying, My son, what do you require? I have a question to ask, said he. Ask, my son, he prompted. Thereupon he asked: Why are the eyes of the Palmyreans bleared? My son, you have asked a great question, replied he; because they live in sandy places. He departed, tarried a while, returned, and called out, Is Hillel here? Is Hillel here? He robed and went out to him, saying, My son, what do you require? I have a question to ask, said he. Ask, my son, he prompted. He asked, Why are the feet of the Africans wide? My son, you have asked a great question, said he; because they live in watery marshes. I have many questions to ask, said he, but fear that you may become angry. Thereupon he robed, sat before him and said, Ask all the questions you have to ask. Are you the Hillel who is called the leader of Israel? Yes, he replied. If that is you, he retorted, may there not be many like you in Israel. Why, my son? queried he. Because I have lost four hundred zuz through you, complained he. Be careful of your moods, Hillel answered. Hillel is worth it that you should lose four hundred zuz and yet another four hundred zuz through him, yet Hillel shall not lose his temper.

Menorat Hameor

Written by Isaac Abuab I (lived at the end of the 14th Century)

Menorat Hameor has gone through over seventy printings over the past four hundred and fifty years. This passage is taken from the seventh section of the book, appropriately entitled, The Seventh Candle, Concerning Anava.
How great is humility? So great that the Holy One singles it out to glorify and praise it, as it is written in the Tractate of Megilla (31a). Rabbi Yochanan says: Wherever one finds the might of the Holy One, he also finds His humility. This is found in the Torah and is repeated in the Prophets and repeated again in the Writings of the Bible. In the Torah it is written: For the Lord Your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of lords... (Deuteronomy 10:7) This verse is followed by, “...who does justice for the orphan and the widow.”

In the Prophets it is written: For God says High and exalted He dwells forever... (Isaiah 57:15) This is immediately followed by “...and the downtrodden and dispirited will be revived...”

In the Writings it is written: “...extol him who rides on the clouds; his name is the Lord” (Psalms 68:5) which is followed by, “...father of orphans and judge to the widows...”

Thus a person has to imitate the qualities of his Creator with all his might, in order to ascend to the highest rung and cling to humility. This will entitle him to be loved by God and people as well. When a person grasps on to the quality of humility, he will distance himself from much of the filth found in humanity, and he will hasten to the qualities of holiness, purity and abstinence, for humility is recognized through five things:

1. He should forgive those who have wronged him and he could even go so far as to pay him, as it is written: “Do not say just as he has done to me I will do to him, I will return to the man as he has done. (Proverbs 24:29) Because of his humility, he is not concerned of the wrong that has been done to him.

2. If trouble comes to his finances or his health, or his sons and relatives die, he will accept the judgement, and accept the decrees of the Lord with love, for this is the way of humility when one receives afflictions. This is the way Aaron behaved when his sons Nadav and Avihu died. He accepted the judgement because of his humility, and did not erupt in his personal anguish, as it is written, “...And Aaron was silent.”...

3. If people honor him, he should not be proud, but rather he should be governed by the way of humility, and not be haughty in his heart. We have found this quality in Abraham when he honored Ephron and called him “My master a governor, a lord...” (Genesis 23:6) He even diminished himself in front of the most downtrodden as it is written, “And Abraham bowed before the people of the land...” (Ibid:12)

4. If he is found to have a reputation for wisdom, insight, wealth, or influence with the king, or anything else that make people haughty, he should not hold himself over his friends, but rather he should be humble and modest and he should behave as he did
before he was known for these things. As it is written: “If the spirit of the ruler ascends to you, do not leave your place.” (Ecclesiastes 10:4) This is referring to the place you were before.

5. If afflictions happen to you do not hesitate to do teshuva in public. Do not refuse to do so because of personal pride. We have the example of those who were in the diaspora at the time of Ezra when he rebuked them, they repented and did teshuva immediately. As it is written: “We have betrayed our God and have settled with foreign wives...” (Ezra 10:2) They repented and righted their ways.