

6-14-25 Message to Roeh Israel Abilene – *B'Haalotcha* (as you make [the light] go up)
Torah Portion: Numbers 8:1 – 12:16
Haftarah: Zechariah 2:10 – 4:7
Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: Rom 12:3-4

Biblical Dispute Resolution 11 – Productive Conversations 1 – Humility is Key

Central question: How can we have conversations, and not arguments?

We are in parasha *B'Haalotacha*. Its name comes from the 17th through 19th word in English, and the 11th word in the original Hebrew.

Num 8:1-3

8 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to Aaron and say to him, 'When you mount the lamps, the seven lamps will give light in the front of the lampstand.'" 3 Aaron therefore did so; he mounted its lamps at the front of the lampstand, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

							8:1
	וַיִּדְבֹר	יְהוָה	אֶל־	מֹשֶׁה	לֵאמֹר:		
	And spake	the Lord	unto	Moses,	saying,		
	<u>1696</u>	<u>3068</u>	<u>413</u>	<u>4872</u>	<u>559</u>		
							2
דַּבֵּר	אֶל־	אַהֲרֹן	וְאָמַרְתָּ	אֵלָיו	בְּהִעָלְתָּךְ	אֶת־	
Speak	unto	Aaron,	and say	unto him,	When thou lightest		
<u>1696</u>	<u>413</u>	<u>175</u>	<u>559</u>	<u>413</u>	<u>5927</u>	<u>853</u>	
אֶל־	מִוֶּל פָּנָי	הַמְנוּכָה	וְאִירֹו	שִׁבְעַת	הַנְּרוֹת:		
over against	the candlestick.	shall give light	seven	the lamps			
<u>6440</u>	<u>4136</u>	<u>413</u>	<u>215</u>	<u>7651</u>	<u>5216</u>		
							3
וַיַּעַשׂ	כֵּן	אַהֲרֹן	אֶל־	מִוֶּל פָּנָי	הַמְנוּכָה	הָעֵלָה	נִרְתִּיָּהּ
And did	so;	Aaron	over against	the candlestick,	he lighted	the lamps thereof	
<u>6213</u>	<u>3651</u>	<u>175</u>	<u>6440</u>	<u>4136</u>	<u>413</u>	<u>5927</u>	<u>5216</u>
כַּאֲשֶׁר	צִוָּה	יְהוָה	אֶת־	מֹשֶׁה:			
as	commanded	the Lord		Moses.			
<u>834</u>	<u>6680</u>	<u>3068</u>	<u>853</u>	<u>4872</u>			

Today we are continuing in our series on Biblical Dispute Resolution, and we will begin to shift from how not to speak to one another, to how to have productive conversation instead.

We will begin that transition with the final Hebraic concept regarding speech, known as *shimras lashon*, “watching what you say.”

Watch What You Say - *Shimras haloshon*

This is not so much a prohibition against improper speech as it is an admonition for us to use the *best* of proper speech. In Hebrew

understanding, this concept is called *shimras haloshon*, which means, “guarding the tongue.” It may be best captured in English as, “watch what you say.”

We have been discussing improper speech, but merely avoiding improper speech does not produce the type of excellence in speech that G-d expects of us.

The righteous governing of speech so as to lift our words out of the pit of improper speech, doesn’t stop when one simply avoids evil speech. We should endeavor to reach ever-higher levels of excellent speech.

As those who stand for our G-d, we should not only refuse to engage in sinful speech, but should strive to use uplifting speech. There is substantial scriptural underpinning for this concept.

Proverbs 21:23.

Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble.

Psalms 34:13–14.

Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. 14 Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

Eph 4:29–32.

29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

We should work to put away sinful speech, and replace it with edifying speech which promotes unity and love. Unity and love promote restoration of relationships which is the hallmark of true believers. These serve as primary signs to the entire world of our association with G-d.

With that in mind, let's move on to the basics of having productive conversations with people, even those who have opposing views to our own.

Humility is Key

Before we can even begin to engage in a conversation with someone else which has a goal of increased understanding, we must begin with a humble heart.

In last week's lesson, we featured some verses which speak of how a humble heart is what G-d expects. I wish to add one more, which comes from the admonition given by Peter to the believers of his day, as he invoked some of the passages we have already seen, above.

1 Peter 3:8-12

8 To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; 9 not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. 10 For, "Let him who means to love life and see good days Refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from

speaking guile. 11 "And let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 "For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, And His ears attend to their prayer, But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

One of the most important people in the founding of our nation is Benjamin Franklin. Today he is remembered for many notable achievements.

His studies of electricity earned him a prominent place in the history of physics. He charted and named the "Gulf Stream" current. He invented the lightning rod, bifocal glasses, and what became known as the "Franklin stove." He founded what would become known as the University of Pennsylvania.

He was called by his peers "The First American" because of his persistent push for independence from England. He was the only person to sign the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Paris peace with Britain, and the US Constitution.

Franklin had many good reasons to be proud of his amazing accomplishments. And for a time, he was very proud.

Franklin used his superior intellect as an accomplished swordsman use his blade – to force lesser opponents into submission with clever rhetoric and cutting jabs. He quickly became adept in his skill with words, and it seems he took great pride in his verbal victories. But as he grew more mature in age and wisdom, he began to realize that his victories had a price. He would win the battle of words, but at the cost of alienation and animosity. He learned that his words didn't win-over his opponent but rather caused that individual to become even more opposed to him.

In his autobiography Franklin described his turning point from pride, “I determined, endeavoring to cure myself, if I could, of this vice or folly.” In that endeavor, he crafted a simple maxim: “Imitate Jesus and Socrates.” Thus, he wished to emulate the famous humility of Yeshua and Socrates.

He still engaged in debates, but softened his words by using phrases like “it appears to me,” rather than more harsh statements which forced the other person into a defensive position.

In this way, Franklin found a new dynamic at play. Some who were enemies became friends. This singular change – from pride to humility – became instrumental in Franklin's transformation to the diplomatic

genius that we now know him to be. Franklin discovered the benefits of humility, and we should do the same.

Humility begins with a recognition that we don't have the highest levels of what the world seems to value, but that we have enough to do the job. And a humble person won't be puffed-up by thinking too much of himself.

Rom 12:3-4

3 For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

There is a Yiddish term which is applied to a person who is more than slightly clueless, and thinks more highly of himself than he should. *Shmendrik*. To say the least, it is not a good thing to be referred to as a *shmendrik*.

In modern times, those who have not been closely acquainted with Biblical principles have once again discovered the benefits of humility. An excellent article on humility, entitled *The Unexpected Benefits of*

Being Humble, written by Makai Allbert, appeared on May 18, 2025 in the Epoch Times. I commend it to you for additional reading.¹

This article cites studies in which almost everyone who was given a task over-estimated their performance. They might claim a 70% success, when their actual performance rating is closer to 35%. The article continues:

Such overconfidence isn't exclusive to the bold or prideful—it's human nature, said Mark Leary, psychology and neuroscience professor at Duke University, who researches humility. Accordingly, we need to adapt and adjust to it. It begins by acknowledging—like Socrates—that, “I know that I know nothing.” Psychologists call this awareness of one's own fallibility “intellectual humility.”

“Intellectual humility is simply recognizing that everything you believe may not be certain or true,” Leary told The Epoch Times, pointing out that while this realization may initially sting, it opens doors to an unparalleled potential to learn, improve, and succeed.

¹ <https://www.theepochtimes.com/health/the-unexpected-benefits-of-being-humble-5852979>

The article cites a series of studies published in *Learning and Individual Differences*. Those studies found that those who are “intellectually humble” are more likely to embrace challenges and persist in the face of failure. This study suggests that the benefits of humility go well beyond being able to discard some beliefs we once held dear, in favor of more accurate truths.

The article continues:

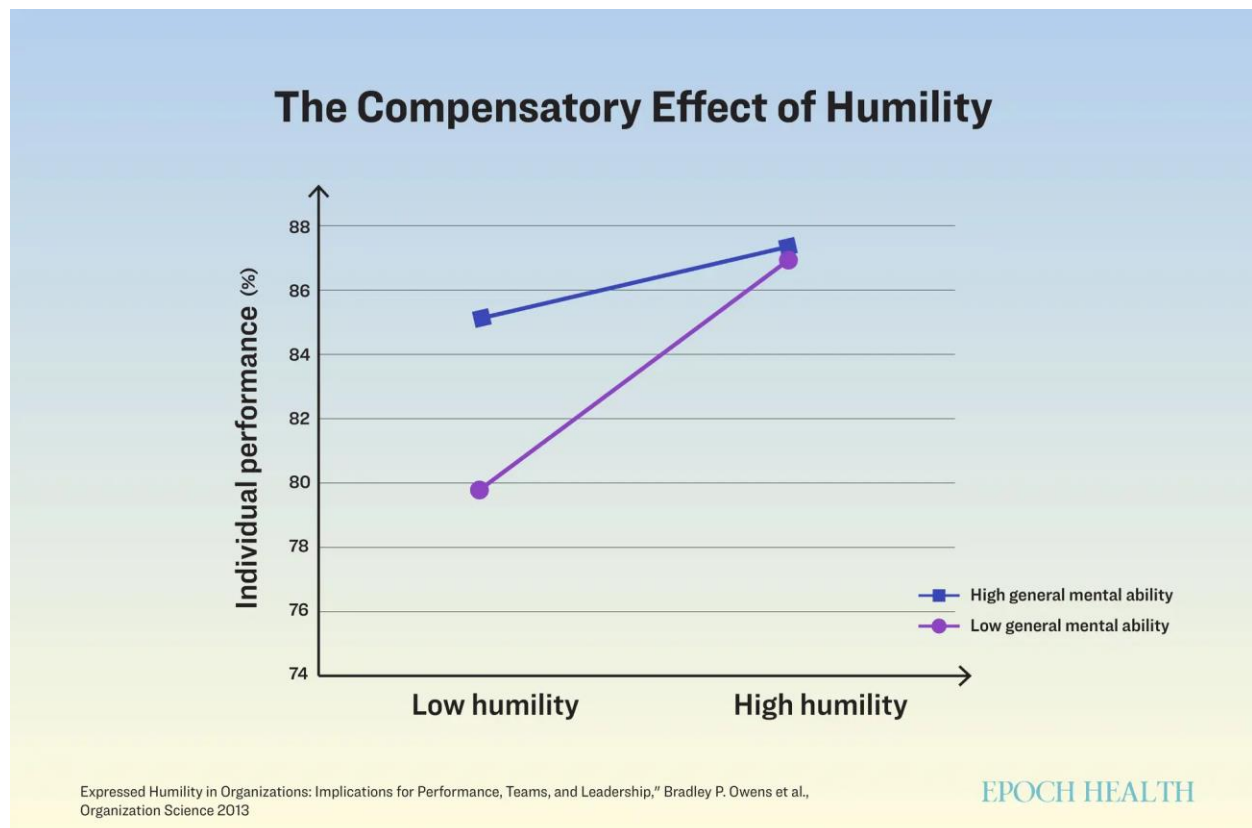
Elizabeth Krumrei-Mancuso, professor of psychology at Pepperdine University and humility researcher, has found similarities in her research. “We found that even though intellectual humility isn’t directly related to IQ or how smart people are, it is related to how much knowledge they possess,” she told The Epoch Times. Mancuso breaks down the simple mechanism: “If you’re willing to admit to yourself and to others what you don’t know, then you’re also more likely to absorb and take in new information.”

The article recognized that there are two primary predictors of workplace success in any person – intelligence and work ethic.

But additional research published in *Organization Science* showed there is another factor that is maybe more important.

The study introduced humility into the equation and found that higher humility could compensate for lower mental ability. It found, “those with lower cognitive ability by higher humility achieved performance scores comparable to, and in some cases better than, those with higher mental ability but low humility.”

The study concluded that the “compensatory effect” of humility was tied to the willingness of the person to learn and grow from mistakes. And the study also found that leaders benefit from humility.



The article continues with some great advice gathered from Jim Collins, who wrote a number of great books on leadership, based upon personal research into what makes a great leader, and why.²

Jim Collins, researcher and business consultant, and his team dug through nearly 1,500 companies, looking for patterns that could explain why only a handful ever make the leap from average to extraordinary. Collins wrote his findings in his best-selling book “Good to Great.”

After combing through decades of data, the team found just 11 companies that met their criteria. These companies weren’t startups or lucky tech giants. They were companies like Walgreens, Kimberly-Clark, and Nucor—industries that had quietly outperformed the likes of Coca-Cola, Intel, and General Electric.

The team turned their sights upwards and analyzed the leaders of these companies. Every single one of these “great” companies had a leader with a rare and paradoxical blend: outstanding personal humility and fierce professional will.

² Two of these books are *Good to Great*, and *Leadership Gold*. Both books are in my personal library.

Collins called them level 5 leaders.

Level 5 leaders are the rarest kind. Like other managers, they are effective in organizing people and resources to meet goals. The sole difference is that they shun the spotlight and deflect credit to others—they are humble.

When pressed to talk about themselves, they said things like, “I don’t think I can take much credit. We were blessed with marvelous people.” When things went wrong, they took full responsibility. When things went right, they pointed out the window—never in the mirror.

What stimulated the remarkable outcomes?

Leary explained that humble leaders motivate others to contribute more ideas, gathering more viewpoints and evidence before taking action, which, in the long run, allows them to make better decisions.

People are also more inclined to trust someone who displays humility because it implies honesty and a lack of ego-driven motives. Even after just 30 minutes of conversation, people

can determine who is humble, and those individuals are viewed more positively.

One statement by Mancuso in the article stands out in relation to the topic of our series now. Humble people are more likely to engage with opposing perspectives and are “more likely to actually hear what the other side has to say.” Mancuso concludes: “If you have no awareness that you could be wrong, then you’re closing the door to getting closer to the truth.” “Pride is the barrier, and humility is the pathway.”

Let’s examine the true cost of pride, in a passage that speaks of the most prideful one.

Isa 14:12-15

12 "How you have fallen from heaven,

O star of the morning, son of the dawn!

You have been cut down to the earth,

You who have weakened the nations!

13 "But you said in your heart,

'I will ascend to heaven;

I will raise my throne above the stars of God,

And I will sit on the mount of assembly

In the recesses of the north.

14 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;

I will make myself like the Most High.'

15 "Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,

To the recesses of the pit.

And let us remember the victory of the most humble.

Isa 42:1-4

42 "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;

My chosen one in whom My soul delights.

I have put My Spirit upon Him;

He will bring forth justice to the nations.

2 "He will not cry out or raise His voice,

Nor make His voice heard in the street.

3 "A bruised reed He will not break,

And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish;

He will faithfully bring forth justice.

4 "He will not be disheartened or crushed,

Until He has established justice in the earth;

And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law."

Scripture tells us that Moses was the most humble of all the people.³ It cannot be argued that his leadership of the people was ineffective, or lacking in any important trait. We study his words and his life today as an example of how we can live. He followed the directions of G-d for his walk, and his conversations with others.

As we embark on learning to have productive conversations with others – even those who are strongly opposed to our beliefs – let's remember to build everything on a foundation of humility.

With an appropriate level of humility, we will be able to speak in ways which will not only avoid sin, but our words will rise above and demonstrate excellence in what we say. Then our light will shine in darkness, and others will see the truth of our G-d.

³ Numbers 12:3