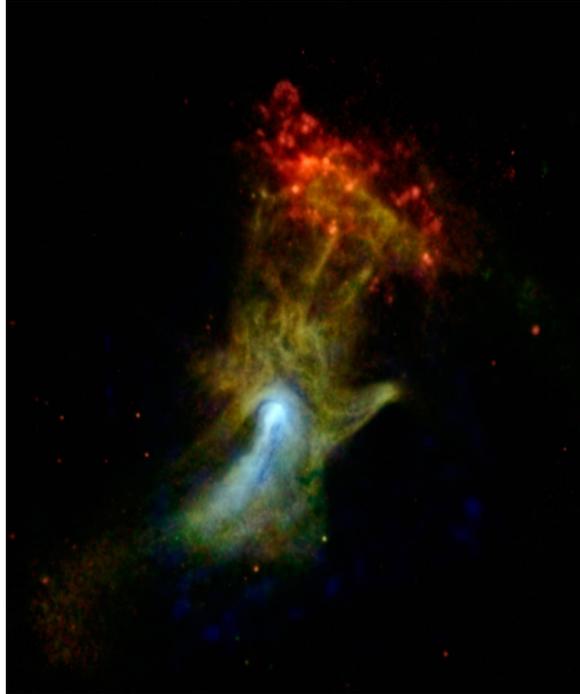


# MEDITATIONS FOR SIVAN



For thus said He who high aloft forever dwells, whose name is holy:  
I dwell on high, in holiness, yet with the contrite and the humble of spirit -  
reviving the spirits of the humble, reviving the hearts of the contrite.  
(Isaiah 57:15)

## HUMILITY AND MAJESTY

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<sup>1</sup> Image credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/McGill, Nicknamed the “Hand of God,” it is a cloud of material ejected from a star that exploded.

Wherever you find God's greatness, there you will find His humility.<sup>2</sup>

The Talmud traces biblical passages<sup>3</sup> where God's power is juxtaposed to His forbearance. More accurately, *invetanuth* [humility] emerges as God's association with the depressed members of society, the widow, the orphan, the demoralized...in requiring a humility that is another face of greatness, God looks...for a genetic marker of the *tzelem elokim* (the image of God), the godlike play of the lion and the lamb in one face.<sup>4</sup>

We see this affirmation and the supreme expression of humility and majesty - of the Lion and Lamb - in the face of Messiah Yeshua. As imitators of Yeshua, what does this mean for us? How does *tzelem elokim* (the image of God) play out in our lives as both humility and power?

In this month of Sivan may God reveal to us the relationship of humility and majesty. As we prayerfully seek the virtue of humility, may our hearts be a dwelling place for the spirit of God (Isaiah 57:15) and our lives a testimony to His majesty and greatness.

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The following meditations are an eclectic collection of thoughts about humility from spiritual leaders. We encourage you to take these thoughts and study them through the light of Scripture.

#### SIVAN - 1

Our primary role model for...humility is none other than God.

- Alan Morinis, *Everyday Holiness: The Jewish Path of Mussar*, p. 51

#### SIVAN - 2

On what do the virtues depend? All virtues and duties are dependent on humility.

- Rabbi Bachya ben Joseph ibn Pakuda, *Duties of the Heart*

#### SIVAN - 3

The sages teach that Torah is compared to water. For just as water only runs downhill, never uphill, the word of God can only be heard in a humble heart.

-From *Tannit 7a*

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<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Yochanan

<sup>3</sup> Rabbi Yochanan said: Wherever you find the power (*gevurah*) of the Holy Blessed One, you find God's humility (*anavah* or *invetanuth*). This is stated in the Torah, repeated in the Prophets, and stated a third time in the Writings. It is written in the Torah, "For Adonai your God is the God of gods and Lord of lords" (Deut. 10:7), and it says immediately afterwards, "Who exacts justice for the orphan and widow."

It is repeated in the Prophets: "Thus says the High and Lofty One, Who inhabits eternity and Whose name is holy" (Isa. 57:15), and it says immediately afterwards, "[I dwell] with one who is of a contrite and humble spirit." It is stated a third time in the Writings, as it is written: "Extol the One Who rides upon the skies, Whose name is Adonai" (Psalm 68:5), and immediately afterwards it is written, "Father of orphans and advocate of widows." Megillah 31:a

<sup>4</sup> Avivah Zornberg, *The Particulars of Rapture*, p. 362

#### SIVAN - 4

The Jewish moralists are fully aware that any conscious attempt to attain to humility is always self-defeating and that pride can masquerade as humility. Crude vanity and self glorification are easily recognized for what they are. Mock modesty is less easy to detect. It is not unusual for a man to take pride in his humility; nor is it unknown for a man to indulge in the more subtle form of self deception in which he prides himself that he is not a victim of false modesty.

- Rabbi Louis Jacobs, *Humility in Judaism*

#### SIVAN - 5

Humility -- true humility -- is one of the most expansive and life-enhancing of all virtues. It does not mean undervaluing yourself. It means valuing other people. It signals a certain openness to life's grandeur and the willingness to be surprised, uplifted, by goodness wherever one finds it.

- Rabbi Sacks, *On Humility*

#### SIVAN - 6

...the greater part of humility is, the capacity to be open to something greater than oneself. False humility is the pretense that one is small. True humility is the consciousness of standing in the presence of greatness, which is why it is the virtue of prophets, those who feel most vividly the nearness of G-d.

- Rabbi Sacks, *On Humility*

#### SIVAN - 7

There is no truth without humility.

- Abraham Joshua Heschel

#### SIVAN - 8

Humility and modesty in the face of death should teach us humility and modesty in the face of life as well.

- Shmuel Goldin, *Unlocking the Torah Text: Vayikra*, p. 91

#### SIVAN - 9

The mark of royalty is humility.

- Rabbi Sacks, *Greatness is Humility*

#### SIVAN - 10

Humility is meant to be a strength, not a weakness. When a person claims humility as an excuse for inaction, it becomes a weakness rather than a strength...such a person is abusing the virtue of humility rather than practicing it. Authentic humility may be a conduit to great accomplishment but it can never become an excuse for evading a challenge that faces us.

- Sherwin and Cohen as shared in *Becoming a Mensch* by Ronald Pies, p. 39

### SIVAN - 11

Rebbe Bunam of Pshike said: "Every person should have a piece of paper in each of his two pockets. On one piece, he should write down... 'The world was created for my sake alone'; but the other should carry the biblical verse 'I am dust and ashes.' What is important is not to confuse the pockets.

- Elie Wiesel, *Wise Men and Their Tales*, p. 221

### SIVAN - 12

True humility does not make you into a "doormat" for others to step on; on the contrary, humility gives you enduring strength.

- Rabbi Simon Jacobson

### SIVAN - 13

In the moral universe, success, when it leads to pride, becomes failure. Failure, when it leads to humility, can be success.

- Rabbi Sacks, *From Pain to Humility*

### SIVAN - 14

We now understand what humility is. It is not self-abasement. C. S. Lewis put it best: 'Humility', he said, 'is not thinking less of yourself. It is thinking of yourself less.' True humility means silencing the "I." For genuinely humble people, it is God, and other people, and principle that matter, not me. As it was once said of a great religious leader, "He was a man who took God so seriously that he didn't have to take himself seriously at all."

- Rabbi Sacks, *From Pain to Humility*

### SIVAN - 15

Humility means occupying your appropriate space, neither too much nor too little. Do you express humility by limiting yourself to taking up just the appropriate space while leaving room for others? Next time you sit on a bench, watch how much of it you occupy. There is no need to cringe on the edge, because you're entitled to sit. Yet there is no justification for sprawling into a space that ought to accommodate someone else. Or when someone shares a piece of news with you, do you come right back with your own concerns, filling the space they've opened, or do you make room to follow up what the person has introduced?

...Do you leave enough space in your life for others, or are you jamming up your world with your self? Or is there space you ought rightfully to occupy that you need to stretch into?

- Alan Morinis, *Everyday Holiness: The Jewish Path of Mussar*, p. 94, 53-54

### SIVAN - 16

To be humble is to carry ourselves in the world in a way that is cognizant of our humanness. We are of the divine and of the earth, the apex of creation and the creatures most capable of harming others. We are magnificent creatures and also supremely fragile. We are no more and no less fully human beings. Perhaps most important, we are neither more nor less than our fellow humans.

**SIVAN - 17**

The more people respect everyone, regardless of race, creed, color, social station, income and the like, the more the world becomes peaceful...This is *tikkun olam*, the [healing] of the world. Since mutual respect, peace and harmony all stem from humility, then humility is truly the root of *tikkun olam*.

- Rabbi Lazer Brody

**SIVAN - 18**

We can choose to make the experience of pain a crucible of compassion for the needy and of humility in serving the most vulnerable.

- Rabbi Elie Kaplan Spitz, *The Jewish Book of Grief and Healing*, p. 133

**SIVAN - 19**

Rashi...identified tolerance, along with modesty, as the defining characteristic of humility...Hillel and his disciples were not certain that they were entirely in the right, they tolerated opposing views, realizing that, though these views might be wrong in their conclusions, they might still learn something from them. Therefore, a humble person bears no ill will toward those who disagree with him. Such an individual is aware that people have the right to understand the world differently, and that their perceptions might have something to teach him.

- Rabbi Joseph Teluskin, *A Code of Jewish Ethics: Volume 1: You Shall Be Holy*, p. 215

**SIVAN - 20**

Those who have humility are open to things greater than themselves while those who lack it are not. That is why those who lack it make you feel small while those who have it make you feel enlarged. Their humility inspires greatness in others.

- Rabbi Sacks, *From Pain to Humility*

**SIVAN - 21**

Humility is a sensitivity to that which lies beyond.

- Tzvi Freeman

**SIVAN - 22**

Humility is the awareness that all you have is a gift.

- Zelig Pliskin

**SIVAN - 23**

Humility is the beginning of liberation and the foundation of spiritual growth.

- Pinchas Stolper, *Living Beyond Time: The Mystery and Meaning of the Jewish Festivals*, p. 331

**SIVAN - 24**

The key virtue of a chosen people is humility.

- Rabbi Sacks, *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence*, p. 198

**SIVAN - 25**

Humility is the root and beginning of repentance.

- Bachya ibn Pakuda, as quotes by Louis E. Newman in *Repentance: The Meaning & Practice of Tehsuvah*, p. 137

**SIVAN - 26**

When it becomes too much about "me," our humility is out of balance.

- Greg Marcus, *The Spiritual Practice of Good Actions*

**SIVAN - 27**

When we place the self at the centre of our universe, we eventually turn everyone and everything into a means to our ends. That diminishes them, which diminishes us. Humility means living by the light of that-which-is-greater-than-I. When God is at the centre of our lives, we open ourselves up to the glory of creation and the beauty of other people. The smaller the self, the wider the radius of our world.

- Rabbi Sacks, *The Greatness of Humility* (Shoftim 5776)

**SIVAN - 28**

Liminal experiences tend to combine humility and sacredness, a beautiful description of Jacob's encounter with God, and of our experience of prayer.

- Rabbi Sacks, *Covenant & Conversation: A Weekly Reading of the Jewish Bible, Volume 1*, p. 185

**SIVAN - 29**

Prayer teaches us that art of humility... to stand in the presence of God with our heart looking up toward the heavens and our eyes looking down. It teaches us to embrace the unknown and to muster up our faith in moments of doubt, pain, and anxiety. It reminds us that we are part of a greater existence.

- Reb Mimi Feigelson

**SIVAN - 30**

Fill me with Your spirit. Let me open my heart to You that I become aware of Your indwelling presence. I ask this gift in humility, trusting to Your grace in the knowledge that the hungry heart seeking You may find You within itself. Holy One, give me tranquility of spirit and with it, the will to work for righteousness with all my might. So will Your grace and power lead me to blessing.

- Rabbi Israel Mattuck, Adapted by Rabbi Chaim Stern