

# *“Piercing the Rabbinical Veil”*

PARSHA INSIGHTS - KI SISA (5760)

## **PLEASE REMOVE YOUR MASK**

When Moshe came down from *Har Sinai* [Mount Sinai] with the second set of tablets, the skin of his face radiated with divine light. This had started when Hashem had spoken to him on the mountain. Aharon and *Bnai Yisroel* [the Children of Israel] were afraid to approach him, so Moshe called to them and then taught them Torah. After communicating Hashem’s words to the nation, Moshe placed a cover (“*masveh*”) on his face. He would remove it when he came before Hashem, and it would remain off when he conveyed the words of Hashem to the people. When taking leave of the nation, he would replace the cover on his face until coming in to speak with Hashem again. This topic is recorded and analyzed in the last seven verses of our *parsha* [Torah portion] with commentaries.

Rav Moshe Feinstein wonders: Why did Moshe *Rabainu* [Moses our teacher] make sure to REMOVE the cover when he communicated with the Jewish people? Can we learn anything from this? He suggests that it hints to a fundamental idea in Torah education. **A *rebbe* [teacher/rabbi] must not “hide his face” from his students.** He needs to think about each individual and examine his or her particular needs. Whenever possible, a Torah teacher must be up to date regarding the general welfare of every *talmid* [student]. This reinforces the concept expressed repeatedly by our sages, that students are like children.

Similarly, states Rav Moshe, one needs to “keep his eyes open” concerning his own spiritual growth and that of his family members. Hiding from reality, wearing a veil over one’s face, is counterproductive. This reminds me of the holy words of the *Mesilas Yesharim* near the beginning of *perek bais* [chapter two].

“One who walks in this world without considering whether his way of life is good or bad is like a blind man walking at the edge of a river, who is in very great danger... For there is no difference between natural blindness and self-inflicted blindness, shutting one’s eyes as an act of will and desire.”

A second message Rav Moshe derives from our *pasuk* [verse] has to do with the proper attitude a student should embrace. Why did Moshe *Rabainu* not don his face covering when teaching *Bnai Yisroel*? It hints that there should be no barriers between the instructor and the disciples. The STUDENT must try to “get through to” the *rebbe*, even if obstacles exist. Additionally, it is ideal for the pupils to actually see the face of their teacher, just as Moshe made sure not to conceal his face with the “*masveh*” while learning with the Jewish people. A famous *pasuk* in *Yeshaya* [Isaiah] 30:20 attests to this: “Your teacher will not withdraw himself anymore, but your eyes will see your teacher.”

These are some profound lessons contained in the end of today’s *parsha*.

*By Rabbi Moshe Heigh*

Text © 2000 Rabbi Moshe Heigh. Main title, formatting and definitions © 2011 Jewlight Inc. This Essay may only be printed unaltered in its entirety with copyrights displayed and given out free-of-charge. Linking allowed if your topic is relevant. Posting online is strictly prohibited.