

GIVE IT YOUR ALL

by Rabbi Elly Broch

"Amram took Yocheved his aunt as a wife, and she bore him Aaron and Moshe. This is the Aaron and Moshe to whom G-d said, 'Take the children of Israel out of Egypt according to their legions.' They are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh, King of Egypt, to take the Children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; this is Moshe and Aaron." (Shemos/Exodus 6:20, 26-27)

Rashi observes the variation of the order in which Moshe and Aaron are mentioned; there are places where Aaron is mentioned before Moshe and others where it is reversed. Rashi explains that this occurs because the brothers were considered equal in greatness. Although a fascinating sentiment, how is it possible to equate Aaron to Moshe, the greatest leader of the Jewish Nation, whom G-d Himself declared as the supreme prophet and one who surpassed all in humility? Further, Moshe alone was chosen to give over the Torah to the people of Israel.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1) explains that certainly Moshe was objectively greater than Aaron in his spiritual achievements and intensity of closeness to his Creator. However, Aaron fulfilled his potential to the best of his ability and harnessed all his talents in serving G-d. They both fulfilled all they were capable of achieving and were, therefore, equal in the Divine Perspective. Thus, he merited to be compared to his brother Moshe.

The Talmud (Bava Basra 10b) states that when Rabbi Yosef was soon to leave this world, his father, Rabbi Yehoshua, asked him what he could see. "An upside down world," he answered. "The elevated people are lowly and the lowly are honored." This reveals to us that there are those who in this world enjoy an elevated and respected position who in the next world are not accorded such great honor. In contrast, there are those who are lowly, poor and despised in this world, but achieve great recognition in the next world. The Talmud teaches us that only G-d knows a person's abilities and potential, only He can determine if he is utilizing his talents to the fullest. Therefore, the results and achievements expected from different people are different. There may be individuals who do not seem to generate results or accomplish a great deal, due to some personal constraints, but who invest themselves fully in their lives. There are others who may possess numerous talents and abilities who can achieve great accolades even without fully engaging themselves. They may experience an abundance of rewards, honors and recognition in this world but may be disappointed in the afterlife, when G-d relates to them according to their unrealized potential.

We live in an externally-oriented world in which only tangible results count, causing us to define

achievement in superficial terms. Those who are talented, cunning and visibly productive are respected, whereas those who do not are overlooked. Appreciating another's inherent worth is not an employment situation, where one qualifies only if he can perform the requisite tasks at hand. G-d gives each of His children the tools he needs for life; success in Jewish terms is defined by growth accomplished and effort expended given the tools this individual has at his disposal. Regardless of the quantitative output, a person who sincerely strives and struggles is a spiritual success.

Have a Good Shabbos!

(1) 1895-1986; Rosh Yeshiva/Dean of Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem in New York City; the leading Halachic/Jewish legal decisor of his time and one of the principal leaders of Torah Jewry through much of the last century

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