

THE NAME OF THE GAME

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

"And Moshe grew larger, and he went out to his brothers..." [2:11]

Because the Torah already told us that "the boy grew" just one verse earlier, we need to understand why the Torah apparently repeats itself. Rebbe Yehuda the son of Rebbe Elazar explains in the Medrash that the first "growth" referred to physical growth, while the second referred to greatness -- Paro appointed Moshe master of his household. Moshe not only grew taller, he was elevated to a high position.

The Yalkut HaDrush directs us to another Medrash, which tells us that Moshe's growth was unusual. All too frequently, when a person reaches a high office, he forgets -- or pretends to forget -- his brothers, his friends and relatives. He no longer cares about their troubles and problems. But Moshe rose to greatness, becoming master of Paro's household, and did not forget his brothers. On the contrary, "he went out to his brothers" -- he became more and more concerned about their fate, and searched for ways to help them. This is the Jewish way to rise to greatness.

Moshe did not try to be great. He did not aim to be superior. On the contrary, he tried to help everyone -- he humbled himself. "And the man, Moshe, was extremely humble, more than any man on the face of the earth." [Numbers 12:3] And this is why he was given greatness. "All who hunt after greatness, greatness flees from them; all who flee from greatness, greatness pursues them." [Eruvin 13b]

We find the same trait in Eldad and Medad, who (according to the Medrash) denied themselves the opportunity to become part of the Council of 70 elders. "Eldad and Medad said, 'we are not fitting for this greatness.' Said the Holy One, Blessed be He, 'Since you reduced yourselves, I will add to your greatness.'" [Sanhedrin 17a]

We can still find people like this today. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, of blessed memory, was one example. He was widely acknowledged as the world's leading Halachic authority until his passing in 1986. Once, a reporter for the New York Times wanted to understand how someone became such a widely-respected figure. After all, no one held elections and no one ran for the office -- so who made Reb Moshe the leader?

"Someone comes with a question," explained Reb Moshe, "and you give him an answer which he appreciates, and which is completely in accordance with Jewish tradition. So he suggests that others should call you as well." In other words, his position evolved naturally, over a period of several

decades. Had he been trying to glorify himself, he would have given up on studying and dealing with the constant inquiries long before. But Reb Moshe's entire motivation was to help others, to try to give them clear answers to their questions. He was not looking for greatness, so it pursued him instead!

How many projects, organizations, even lives have been ruined, by people who cared only about their own glorification?

That is not the route to greatness, but to self destruction. True leadership is achieved when we devote ourselves to caring about others, helping others, putting their needs ahead of our own. May we all learn to be like Moshe!