

PARSHAS VAERA: EQUAL IN STATURE

by Rabbi Yaakov Horowitz

In the psukim leading up to their encounter with Pharoh, the Torah uses two nearly identical expressions to describe Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon HaCohein. First (Shemos 6:26) we are told: "Hu Aharon U'Moshe asher amar Hashem lohem Hotzieu ..." introducing Aharon and Moshe as the ones who were commanded by Hashem to take the Jews out of Egypt. In the very next pasuk, (Shemos 6:27) we are told: "Heim hamedabrim el Pharoh, ... Hu Moshe V'Aharon," informing us that Moshe and Aharon were [also] the ones who [put their lives at risk and] spoke before Pharoh.

Rashi notes that in the first pasuk, Aharon is listed before Moshe. The order was reversed, however, in the following pasuk, where Moshe's name was mentioned first. Rashi comments that Moshe and Aharon - the two brothers who were the leaders of Klal Yisroel - are listed together interchangeably to tell us that they were equal in stature: "shkulin k'echad."

The Lubliner Rov, Rav Meir Shapiro z"tl, adds to the explanation of Rashi and offers a thoughtful insight into these pesukim. The first pasuk calls attention to the leadership skills of the brothers. The pasuk says that Aharon and Moshe were told by Hashem to free the Bnei Yisroel from Mitzrayim. We might have expected Moshe's name to be listed first. After all, he was selected by Hashem to lead the B'nei Yisroel out of Egypt. But the Torah places Aharon's name first to tell us that they were equal even in leadership, where one seemingly had an advantage over the other.

The same theme continues with the second pasuk. As we all know, Aharon was the better orator of the two brothers. Much time is spent in the Torah's telling us how Moshe sought to excuse himself from his mission on account of his speech impediment - his being a "kvad peh." Hashem, in last week's parsha, agreed with Moshe and told him that Aharon will become his spokesman. But to prove the equality of the brothers, the Torah places Moshe first, before Aharon, when we are told that they went to speak to Pharoh. One might have expected Aharon to be listed first, on account of his better oratory skill. No! Moshe is listed first. Shkulin k'echad!

This beautiful thought of the Lubliner Rov, however, does not address a fundamental difficulty. Even if they were equal in stature and overall accomplishments, Aharon was still a better speaker, and Moshe a more powerful leader. How could our Toras Emes, where every word is so carefully measured, list each of the brothers as being stronger in the areas where they seemed to be secondary?

I would like to suggest that the Torah is teaching us an eternal lesson. Moshe and Aharon, in this

instance, were commended for their efforts as well as their accomplishments. Moshe did not allow the fact that he was a kvad peh to hinder his ability to speak before Pharoah. Aharon accompanied Moshe when they stood down the most powerful man in the world. Each of them had natural gifts, and was rewarded for utilizing them in the service of Hashem. But they were noted most of all - and listed before their brother - for their effort in all areas.

We can derive a profound and powerful lesson from these pesukim that will serve us well during our school years and beyond. Striving for academic excellence and scoring well on tests are integral and important components of our school experience. Our greatest accomplishments, however, are often measured by the effort we expend to overcome our areas of weakness - as we strive to realize our fullest potential.

Best wishes for a gutten Shabbos.

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