

The Shepherd

The Baal Shem Tov was once shown from heaven, that a certain simple man called Moshe the Shepherd served HaShem, blessed be He, better than he did. He longed to meet this shepherd, so he ordered his horses harnessed to his coach and travelled, with a few of his disciples, to the place where he was told the shepherd lived.

They stopped in a field at the foot of a hill and saw, on the hillside above them, a shepherd who was blowing his horn to call his flock. After the sheep gathered to him, he led them to a nearby trough to water them. While they were drinking, he looked up to heaven and began to call out loudly, "Master of the world, You are so great! You created heaven and earth, and everything else! I am a simple man; I am ignorant and unlearned and I do not know how to serve You or praise You. I was orphaned as a child and raised among gentiles, so I never learned any Torah. However, I can blow on my shepherd's horn like a *shofar*, with all my strength, and call out, 'The L-rd is G-d!'" After blowing with all his might on the horn, he collapsed to the ground, without an ounce of energy, and lay there motionless until his strength returned.

Then he got up and said, "Master of the world, I'm just a simple shepherd, I don't know any Torah and I don't know how to pray. What can I do for You? The only thing I know is to sing shepherds' songs!" He then began to sing loudly and fervently with all his strength until, again, he fell to the earth exhausted without an ounce of energy.

After recovering, he got up again and began to call out, "Master of the world! What is it worth that I blew on my horn and sang songs for You, when You are so great? What more can I do to serve You?" He paused for a moment and said, "There is something else I know how to do and I'll do it for Your honour and glory!" He then stood on his head and began to wave his feet wildly in the air. Then he did somersaults one after the other, until he collapsed on the ground, exhausted. The Baal Shem Tov and his disciples watched all this from a distance in amazement.

The shepherd lay there silently until his strength returned. Again, he began to speak and said, "Master of the world, I have done what I can, but I know it is not enough! What more can I do to serve You?" After pausing to reflect, he said, "Yesterday, the nobleman who owns the flock made a feast for his servants and, when it ended, he gave each of us a silver coin. I'm giving that coin to You as a gift, O G-d, because You created everything and You feed all Your creatures, including me, Moshe the little shepherd!" Saying this, he threw the coin upward.

At that moment, the Baal Shem Tov saw a hand reach out from heaven to receive the coin. He said to his disciples, "This shepherd has taught me how to fulfil the verse: 'You shall love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.'"

By Daniel Lefkowitz (adapted from 'Stories Of The Baal Shem Tov')

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No. 301

VaEra 5769 - וארא תשס"ט

מס' ש"א

Moshe's first visit to Pharaoh as the messenger of Hashem did not turn out as planned. He had hoped to convince Pharaoh to release the Jewish People from bondage, which backfired resulting in Pharaoh making it even harsher. He decreed that the people had to go and obtain their own building materials, keeping the quota of construction at the same level.

Moshe was upset and he said to Hashem (5:22), "My master, why have you treated these people badly? Why did you send me on this mission?"

Hashem, upon hearing this rebuked him saying, "I am Hashem. I appeared to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaacov, and they never questioned me. I promised the land of Israel to Avraham, yet he could not find a grave for his wife Sarah until he paid a high price to Ephron for a burial ground. Did he complain? I told Yitzchak to live in this land that I would give to his descendants, yet in order to find water he had to wrangle with the Plishtim shepherds. Did he question me? I promised Yaacov the entire land, yet he was unable to find a place to pitch his tent until he bought a piece of land from Chamor ben Shechem for one hundred Kesitas. Did he complain? Only you had complaints, only you questioned me!"

The Avos also had difficult situations but they never grumbled or questioned Hashem while Moshe made a complaint and was rebuked for it.

If we analyse this idea with a bit more depth, however, it would seem that there is an important difference between Moshe and the Avos. The Avos were private citizens, individuals who were having a hard time. Whilst it was true that they had been promised that a nation would develop from them in the land of Israel, nevertheless at the time there was no nation

and therefore the Avos could manage with suffering in silence i.e. no complaints. Moshe, however, was the leader of an entire nation, responsible for the welfare of millions of people. Surely it was his duty to take responsibility for their hardships and welfare, to complain when things did not go well for them. Why then the rebuke? What did he do wrong?

Furthermore, when the Jewish People sinned with the Golden Calf, Moshe argued for their survival and Hashem did not object. In the desert, Moshe defended them on numerous occasions and Hashem did not object. Why did he object now?

Rabbi Frand explains that the answer lies in Moshe's choice of words. "My master, why have you treated these people **badly**? Moshe characterised Hashem's actions as "bad". This was his mistake. True, it was his responsibility to complain to Hashem on behalf of the Jewish People but at the same time, he had to recognise that everything Hashem did was good. All he could do was ask that the situation become better. In his great love and devotion for the Jewish people, he was distracted by their affliction and lost sight of its ultimate good. For that brief moment when he uttered those words, he failed to see that in the broader scheme of things, Hashem was treating the Jewish people exceedingly well. In fact we know that the length of their slavery in Egypt was reduced because of the harshness of their treatment by the Egyptians, that made up for many years.

By Asher Weisz

Times for Shabbos - זמני שבת

In: 4:19

Out: 5:26

Firstly...

הוא אהרן ומשה אשר אמר ה'... ממצרים הוא משה ואהרן (י' כ"ו-כ"ז)

It was Aharon and Moshe to whom G-d spoke...from Egypt, Moshe and Aharon. (6:26-27)

Rashi discusses these two consecutive verses in this week's parsha. The first possuk mentions Aharon before Moshe, however, the following possuk mentions Moshe before his older brother, Aharon. This is done in order to inform us that neither brother was superior to the other. Moshe and Aharon were of equal spiritual stature and both deserved being mentioned first.

This idea seems very perplexing. For in Devarim, it is explicitly stated that 'there will never be a prophet like Moshe' i.e. he surpasses everyone in greatness. How then, can Rashi say that they were of equal greatness?

The Shelah HaKadosh brings an answer to this. He says that up until Matan Torah, they were equal, but afterwards, Moshe surpassed Aharon and they thus became incomparable.

Another answer is brought to this question. In order to bring about the Exodus, there were two requirements. Firstly, Pharaoh had to be persuaded to allow the Jews to leave his custody. Ruach Hakodesh depicted that they could not leave without his permission. In order to persuade Pharaoh, they needed someone of similar status. Our sages taught, that in the sixty years that Moshe was away from Egypt, he was the king in a place called Kush. This position gave him the necessary skills to negotiate with Pharaoh. Aharon, who had never been in such a position, was unable to

negotiate for the freedom of the Jewish people. Therefore, in regards to speaking with Pharaoh, the Possuk puts Moshe first.

However, there was a second hurdle to overcome, the persuasion of Klal Yisrael (the people of Israel) to agree to leave Egypt. Whilst they were suffering terribly, they at least had food and lodging! This task was the responsibility of Aharon. We know that Aharon was 'ohev shalom ve'rodef shalom' i.e. he always ran after peace. He was constantly amongst Klal Yisrael creating peace. They trusted him and thus in the possuk which talks about bringing Klal

Yisrael out from Egypt, Aharon is placed before Moshe.

This explains what the sages mean by 'they were equal'. Although Moshe actually surpassed his brother in greatness in the episode of the Exodus, each brother's job was as important as the other and only that brother could do that particular task.

An important message is portrayed here. Each and every one of us has a specific task in life which no-one else can accomplish. We are all born with a mission. By striving in Torah, we can achieve completion of that mission with complete success!

By Sammy Epstein

Rose Bushes

Q. There once was an evil wizard. He took 3 women from their homes and turned them into rose bushes that looked exactly alike. He put them in his garden. One of the women had a husband and children and begged the wizard to let her see them. He agreed. At night, he brought the woman to her house. In the morning he came and took her home. One day the husband decided to go rescue her. So he snuck into the wizard's garden. He looked and looked at the 3 identical rose bushes trying to figure out which could be his wife. Suddenly, he knew the answer and he took his wife home. How did he know which rose bush was his wife?

A. The wizard brought the rosebush to her home at night and returned her to the garden in the morning. Therefore, she was the only plant without dew.

Be Strong And Believe!

וידבר משה כן אל בני ישראל ולא שמעו אל משה מקצר רוח ומעבדה קשה (ו' ט')

So Moshe spoke according to the children of Israel; but they did not heed Moshe, because of shortness of breath and difficult service (6:9)

What is this "shortness of breath and difficult service" that prevented the Children of Israel from hearing what should have been welcome news?

The Midrash Aggadah answers; the generation was lacking in belief, and they would say that the hand of HaShem is *too short* to save them, therefore they attached themselves to idolatry - "a difficult service." The Mechilta asks rhetorically, "Do you ever find that a person is visited with good news and he is not happy? Why then does it say, "They did not heed Moses"? Rather, it was difficult in their eyes to separate from the idolatrous service of Egypt."

One Midrash says the "shortness of breath" led them to idolatry. The other claims that it was the idolatrous service that did not allow them to accept the Moshe's proclamation. Which was it? Which is the cause? Which is the effect? What we have here is a portrait of how hopelessly stuck were the Nation of Israel.

When one feels forlorn, it is not unusual to seek substitutes to soothe sore spirits. Once they are made habitual, though, experience tells us that it becomes extremely difficult to unseat the status quo. The "shortness of spiritual breath and vision" may be the initial cause but the "work-holism" or whatever then fills the void and becomes the new reason for being. Anything or anybody that runs interference with it is met with a hostile response. One dare not stand between the drunk and his drink!

A man went to the zoo with his child. In the elephant section, there in open yard stood this multi-ton creature with not more than a kite string around his huge

neck that was attached to a slight stick stuck loosely into the earth beside him and a small link chain placed lowly in front. The man complained bitterly to the attendant that the elephant could stampe and trample visitors without a proper restraint. The zoo keeper assured him everything was alright and explained, "When this jumbo was a little dumbo-baby they put him in that very spot with a thick iron chain around its neck that was attached to a heavy concrete post sunk deeply into the earth. In front of him was placed an electrified fence. Every time he attempted to advance forward he was heavily jolted. Years later all we need is a thin string attached to a stick and a small barrier to remind him. He doesn't believe he can ever move beyond that spot and with confidence we can say that he's going nowhere!"

The Talmud tells us, when King David went to the bathhouse, he became anxious in the moment that was aware that no Mitzvos accompanied him. There is found there no Mezuzah, no Tefillin and no Tallis! Then when he realized that he was affixed since his earliest days, with a permanent Mitzvah, a Bris Milah, he was comforted. What was his fear? There is an inertia factor in Mitzvos. Violations invite violators. Mitzvos inspire more Mitzvos. There's no standing still. One is either climbing or sinking. Yet how does one get started? One needs a light to find a-light, money to make money, and a Mitzvah to make a Mitzvah. So too, the ten plague process groomed the Jewish Nation for the gift of a Mitzvah and provided the initial boost to shift the momentum and thus allow them to merit the Exodus.

Riddle of the Week

Which holiday addition to the 'grace after meals' is it that most people do not say and hope they never have to?

(Answer in next week's Living Torah)

Answer to Last Week's Riddle

By saying guilty, the man on trial goes free, but by saying innocent, he is punished. What is the case?
Answer: The final, most senior, judge of the Sanhedrin (high court) is talking. If all judges before him said guilty, if he too says guilty (a unanimous decision), the man on trial goes free due to a law regarding defending the defendant, however, if he says innocent, the majority of the court will have said guilty and so the man is punished.

Prizes have been sponsored by various local Jewish shops to be raffled off to those who successfully answer the weekly general knowledge question!!! Everyone is welcome to submit an answer by emailing us at LIVINGTORAH@HASMONEAN.CO.UK