

פרשת וארא

Moshe Rabbenu was not happy.

That is clearly our understanding of his mood at the conclusion of last week's Parshas Sh'mos.

Par'o had infamously increased the demands upon B'nei Yisroel and their frustrated Hebrew overseers had made a plea to Par'o, hoping that he would demonstrate some compassion and humanity.

They were even more exasperated at his response.

We read there (Sh'mos Perek 5/P'sukim 14-19):

וַיִּכּוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר שָׂמוּ עֲלֵהֶם נֹגְשֵׁי פְרַעֲהַ לֵאמֹר מִדּוּעַ לֹא כָלִיתֶם חֻקְכֶם לְלֶבֶן כְּתַמּוֹל שְׁלֹשָׁם גַּם תַּמּוֹל גַּם הַיּוֹם: וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֶל פְּרַעֲהַ לֵאמֹר לָמָּה תַעֲשֶׂה כֹה לַעֲבָדֶיךָ: תָּבֵן אֵין נָתַן לַעֲבָדֶיךָ וּלְבָנִים אֹמְרִים לָנוּ עֲשׂוּ וְהִנֵּה עֲבָדֶיךָ מְכִים וְחֹטְאֵת עִמָּךְ: וַיֹּאמֶר נֹרְפִים אַתֶּם נֹרְפִים עַל כֵּן אַתֶּם אֹמְרִים גִּלְכָּה נִזְבַּחְהָ לָהּ: וְעַתָּה לָכוּ עֲבָדוּ וְתָבֵן לֹא יִנָּתֵן לָכֶם וְתִכֶּן לְבָנִים תִּתְּנוּ: וַיִּרְאוּ שְׂטָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתֶם בָּרַע לֵאמֹר לֹא תִגְרַעוּ מִלְּבַיְתֵיכֶם דְּבַר יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ:

¹The officers of B'nei Yisroel, that were placed by the Egyptian oppressors upon the Hebrews to oversee them, were beaten, saying, 'Why did you not complete the set amount of bricks like yesterday and the day before, neither yesterday nor today?'

The officers of B'nei Yisroel came and cried out to Par'o saying, 'Why do you do so to your slaves? Straw was not given to your slaves and bricks – they say to us, "make them", and behold we, your slaves, are beaten and it is made [as if we] your people are sinning.'

Par'o said, 'You are taking it too easy, too easy, therefore you say, "Let us go and make offerings to Hashem." Now, go and work; straw will not be given to you and you will provide the amount of bricks.'

The officers of B'nei Yisroel the distress of B'nei Yisroel saying, 'Do not lessen the daily amount of your bricks.'

¹ The translation includes Rashi's comments.

These righteous afflicted officers, who were beaten because they did not enforce Par'o's quotas with brutality that the Egyptians sought from them, conveyed their frustration to Moshe Rabbenu. This is what we read in the following verses (P'sukim 20-21):

וַיִּפְגְּעוּ אֶת מֹשֶׁה וְאֶת אַהֲרֹן נֹצְבִים לְקִרְאָתָם בְּצֵאתָם מֵאֵת פְּרַעֲהוֹ: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם
יְרֵא ה' עֲלֵיכֶם וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אֲשֶׁר הִבְאִשְׁתֶּם אֶת רֵיחֲנוֹ בְּעֵינֵי פְרַעֲהוֹ וּבְעֵינֵי עַבְדָּיו לְתֵת חֶרֶב
בְּיָדָם לְהַרְגֵנוּ:

The officers of B'nei Yisroel confronted Moshe and Aharon who were standing erect to meet them when they went out from Par'o. The officers said to Moshe and Aharon, 'Let G-d see you and judge you because you have soured our fragrance in the eyes of Par'o and in the eyes of his servants; you have placed a sword in their hand to kill us.

The Torah does not tell us if there was a response from Moshe and Aharon following this confrontation.

What the Torah does tell us is what the reaction of Moshe Rabbenu was. We read² in the following verses (P'sukim 22-23):

וַיָּשָׁב מֹשֶׁה אֶל ה' וַיֹּאמֶר אֲד...נ...י לָמָּה הִרְעַתָּה לְעַם הַזֶּה לָמָּה זֶה שְׁלַחְתָּנִי: וַיֹּאמֶר
בְּאֵתִי אֶל פְּרַעֲהוֹ לְדַבֵּר בְּשִׁמְךָ הִרַע לְעַם הַזֶּה וְהִצַּל לֹא הִצַּלְתָּ אֶת עַמֶּךָ:

Moshe returned to Hashem and he said, 'My Master G-d, why have You dealt badly to this people; why did You send me? From when I came Par'o to speak in Your Name, he dealt badly with this people; You surely have not saved Your people.

This past Shabbos Sh'mos, following Mincha a friend who is a serious Talmid Chochom came over to me and quoted these last two verses and explained them to me (in Ivrit/Yiddish) as follows. He said, 'This is how you have to interpret these P'sukim; this is how you have to read them:

Tatenu [Dear Father], Your people are suffering so badly. Tatenu please do something for them. I cannot bear to see their suffering, Tatenu.

² *Tateh* in Yiddish means 'father'. *Tatenu* is a diminutive – a term of endearment.

Although my friend did not say it, there is certainly is ample reason to explain the words of Moshe Rabbenu in this fashion.

Just last week we read of the Torah's intimation of the choice of Moshe as the leader of Israel from the exile of Egypt.

We read (Perek 3/Posuk 1):

וּמֹשֶׁה הָיָה רֹעֵה אֶת צֹאן יִתְרוֹ חֹתֵנוּ כֹּהֵן מִדְיָן וַיְנַהֵג אֶת הַצֹּאן אַחֲרֵי הַמִּדְבָּר וַיָּבֵא אֶל הַר הָאֵל... לִיקִים חֲרֵבָה:

Moshe was shepherding the sheep of his father-in-law Yisro, he was the Kohen of Midian; Moshe led the sheep past the wilderness and he came to the Mount of G-d, to *Chorev*.

If the Torah teaches us of the compassion of Moshe Rabbenu for his flock of sheep, do we expect less compassion for his flock of his brethren?

And yet, despite the seemingly forcefulness of his point, I sadly had to counter his argument with my disagreement. If the Torah would have revealed to us only these last verses, certainly we could have interpreted them in the way that my friend suggested, a way that would make us convinced that these words would certainly pull the figurative heartstrings of HaKodosh Boruch Hu and would have figuratively moved Him by the care and compassion that Moshe Rabbenu demonstrated.

Except. Except that in order to have a sense of the meaning of words and phrases that could possibly be ambiguous, one has to learn the context in which they were said in order to have a sense of how to interpret them.

What is the continuation of the context? What was the response of HaKodosh Boruch Hu to the plaintive appeal of Moshe Rabbenu?

We continue to read the concluding verse of last week's Parsha and the beginning ones of our Parshas Voera (Sh'mos Perek 6/Psukim 1-5):

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה עֲתָה תִרְאֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לְפָרְעֹה כִּי בְיַד חֲזָקָה יִשְׁלַחַם וּבְיַד חֲזָקָה יִגְרָשֶׁם מֵאֶרֶץ: וַיְדַבֵּר אֵל... לִיקִים אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי ה': וְאָרָא אֶל אַבְרָהָם אֶל יִצְחָק וְאֶל יַעֲקֹב בְּאֵל... לִשׁ... דִּי וּשְׁמִי ה' לֹא נֹדַעְתִּי לָהֶם: וְגַם הַקְּמֹתִי אֶת בְּרִיתִי אִתְּם לְתַת לָהֶם אֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֶת אֶרֶץ מִגְרֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר גָּרוּ בָּהּ: וְגַם אֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת נַאֲקַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר מִצְרִים מַעֲבָדִים אִתְּם וְאֶזְכֹּר אֶת בְּרִיתִי:

Hashem said to Moshe, 'Now you will see that which I will do to Par'o because of the strong hand he will send them and because of a strong hand he will drive them out from his land.'

G-d spoke to Moshe and He said to him, 'I am Hashem'. I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov as *Kel Sha...dai* and by My Name of Hashem I was not known to them. I also established My covenant with them to give them the Land of Canaan, the land of their sojourning that they dwelled there. I heard the cries of B'nei Yisroel – whom the Egyptians are enslaving them and I remembered My covenant.

If the intent of these verses are not sufficiently clear to us, Rashi allows us to 'read between the lines'. He writes;

עתה תראה וגו' - הרהרת על מדותי, לא כאברהם שאמרתי לו (בראשית כא/יב³) כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע, ואחר כך אמרתי לו (שם כב/ב⁴) העלהו לעולה, ולא הרהר אחרי, לפיכך עתה תראה. העשוי לפרעה תראה, ולא העשוי למלכי שבעה אומות, כשאביאם לארץ:

Now you will see – You wondered about My attributes! You are not like Avraham when I said to him, 'Because it will be with Yitzchak that you will be called having seed' and afterwards I said to him, 'Bring Yitzchak up as an *Oloh*-offering – he did not wonder about My attributes⁵.

³ The entire verse reads:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים...לְקַיֵּם אֶל אַבְרָהָם אֵל יִרְעֵ בְעֵינָיו עַל הַנְּעֹר וְעַל אִמְתּוֹ כֹּל אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר אֵלָיךְ שָׂרָה שְׁמֵעַ בְּקוֹלָהּ כִּי בְיִצְחָק יִקְרָא לְךָ זֶרַע:

G-d said to Avraham, 'Let it not be bad in your eyes about the lad [Yishmael] and your maid-servant [Hagar] because it will be with Yitzchak that you will be called having seed.'

⁴ The entire verse reads:

וַיֹּאמֶר קַח נָא אֶת בְּנִךְ אֶת יִצְחָק אֲשֶׁר אָהַבְתָּ אֶת יִצְחָק וְלָךְ לְךָ אֵל אֶרֶץ הַמִּרְיָה וְהֵעֵלְהוּ שָׁם לְעֹלָה עַל אֶחָד הַהָרִים אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלָיךְ:

G-d said, 'Please take your son, your only one, whom you love, Yitzchak and bring him up there as an *Oloh*-offering on one of the mountains that I will say to you.

⁵ Rashi continues with examples of G-d's unfulfilled promises to Yitzchak and Yaakov and the fact that they, just like Avraham Ovinu, did not question Him.

Therefore *now* you will see. [Now] you will see that which will be done to Par'o but [you will] not [see] that which will be done to the kings of the seven nations when I will bring Israel to the Land [of Israel].

ויאמר א...ל'קים אל משה - דבר אתו משפט על שהקשה לדבר ולומר למה הרעותה
לעם הזה:

G-d said to Moshe – G-d spoke with Moshe in judgment because Moshe spoke harshly and said, ‘Why have you dealt badly with this people.’

Let us see, based on the above and what we learn later on, how we know Hashem spoke harshly to Moshe and how we are to explain Moshe’s error when we know that B’nei Yisroel were suffering.

The commentators explain that the fact that the Name the Torah uses when G-d talks to Moshe in this instance is *E...lokim*, a term used for judges, shows that Moshe was addressed with strict justice, not compassion.

בקל ש...ד...י - הבטחתים הבטחות ובכולן אמרתי להם אני קל ש...די

As Almighty G-d – I promised them [the Patriarchs] promises and in all of them I said [introducing Myself] as Almighty G-d.

That is, the commentaries explain, I told them that I have the power to fulfill My promises but they did not see the fulfillment of those promises.

Thus Rashi continues to explain the uniqueness of the terms 'קל ש...ד...י' and *Hashem*, the letters of *yud, heh, vov, heh* and their differential usage in this context:

ושמי ה' לא נודעתי להם - לא הודעתי אין כתיב כאן אלא לא נודעתי לא נכרתי להם
במדת אמתות שלי שעליה נקרא שמי ה' נאמן לאמת דברי, שהרי הבטחתים ולא
קיימתי:

And My Name of Hashem I did not allow to be known to them – The verse does not say, ‘I did not tell them [My Name’] but “I was not known [by that Name]’. I was not recognized by them with My attribute of truthfulness by which My Name is called Hashem – He Who is trustworthy to validate My word. I promised them but did not fulfill for them.

Thus, Moshe Rabbeinu is not answered compassionately. Rather than recognizing the justice of Moshe's words, Hashem berates him for not being as faithful and as loyal as the Ovos.

It would seem that my friend's explanation was only wishful thinking because the verses, accompanied by Rashi's commentary, do not support him whatsoever.

On the other hand, when we continue a few verse later we hear a clear validation of Moshe's concerns and complaints. We read there in Posuk 13:

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל אַהֲרֹן וַיִּצְוֶם אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶל פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְהוֹצִיא אֶת
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon and He commanded them regarding B'nei Yisroel and Par'o, the King of Egypt, to take B'nei Yisroel out of the Land of Egypt.

What was the command regarding Israel? Rashi explains:

וַיִּצְוֶם אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל - צוּם עֲלֵיהֶם לְהַנְהִיגֵם בְּנַחַת וּלְסַבּוֹל אוֹתָם:

He commanded them regarding B'nei Yisroel – G-d commanded them to lead them gently and to be patient with them.

The need for such patience is evident from the intervening verses. Moshe told Israel of G-d's four promises to take them out, save them, redeem them and take them as His People. What occurred when these Divine promises were conveyed to them?

We read (Posuk 9):

וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה כֵּן אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה מִקְצֶר רוּחַ וּמֵעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה:

Moshe spoke such to B'nei Yisroel and they did not listen to Moshe because of shortness of spirit and hard work.

Rashi writes:

וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה - לֹא קִבְּלוּ תַנְחוּמֵי:

They did not listen to Moshe – they did not accept his words of consolation.

מִקְצֶר רוּחַ - כֹּל מִי שֶׁהוּא מִיָּצֵר, רוּחוֹ וְנִשְׁמִיתוֹ קָצֵר וְאֵינוּ יָכוֹל לְהֵאָרִיךְ בְּנִשְׁמִיתוֹ.

From shortness of spirit – Anyone who is in distress has his spirit and his breath shortened and cannot take lengthy [at ease] breaths.

Moshe Rabbenu was commanded to be patient and understanding, gentle and caring. B'nei Yisroel were suffering; they could not be expected to be consoled when they were in such dire straits. They could not be expected to overcome their harsh environment and be inspired by G-d's promises.

Now, if this verse, in which Hashem's compassion for Israel's suffering would have come immediately after Moshe's words of distress for Israel, we would understand the response. Moshe emphasizes Israel's suffering and G-d recognizes it and commands Moshe accordingly.

What is difficult to understand is why does Hashem judge Moshe for his harsh words regarding the plight of B'nei Yisroel when so soon afterwards He validates them?

And, in fact, we did not have to wait for this verse, and for the time elapsed between Moshe's words and these words of Hashem to see Hashem's validation of Moshe's appraisal, the idea that Hashem validated Moshe's concerns is seen immediately following Moshe's complaints.

As a continuation of Hashem's earlier words to Moshe, where He criticizes him harshly, we read the introductory verse to the four promises mentioned earlier. We read (P'sukim 5-6):

וְגַם אֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת נַאֲקַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם מֵעַבְדִּים אֹתָם וְאָזְכֹר אֶת בְּרִיתִי:
לְכֵן אָמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי ה' וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלַת מִצְרַיִם וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם
מֵעַבְדֹתָם וְגִאֲלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּזְרוּעַ נְטוּיָהּ וּבְשִׁפְטִים גְּדֹלִים:

Also I Hashem heard the cries of B'nei Yisroel that Egypt is enslaving them and I remembered My covenant. Therefore say to B'nei Yisroel I am Hashem; I will take you out from under the suffering of Egypt and I will save you from their labor and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments [against Egypt].

The word that stands out in these verses is לְכֵן – *therefore*.

'Therefore' is a conclusion; it is a result of that which was said earlier.

Is the 'therefore' a result of G-d's remembering only. Or is G-d's remembering part of the flow of this dialogue between Moshe Rabbenu and HaKodosh Boruch Hu and the 'therefore' stems from Moshe's words?

And even if the 'therefore' is a consequence of G-d's remembering only, did not the Torah choose to juxtapose G-d's remembering⁶ of the suffering of Israel in the context, if not as a 'response', to Moshe's complaint?

Perhaps we can gain an understanding of the dynamics that we find here by advancing more than 40 years to the last day of the life of Moshe Rabbenu and seeing Moshe's instructions to Yehoshua who was about to succeed him.

We read (D'vorim Perek 31/Posuk 7):

וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לַיהוָשֻׁעַ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו לְעֵינַי כֹּל יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲזַק וְאַמֵץ כִּי אַתָּה תָּבֹוא אֶת הָעָם
הַזֶּה אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע ה' לְאַבְתָּם לָתֵת לָהֶם וְאַתָּה תִּנְחִילָנָה אוֹתָם:

Moshe called to Yehoshua and he said to him before the eyes of all of Israel, 'Be strong and courageous because you will come with this people to the land that Hashem promised to their fathers, to give it to them, and you will bring them the inheritance.'

A few verses later (Posuk 23), Hashem commands Yehoshua in a way that seems strikingly similar to what Moshe had told Yehoshua already. We read:

וַיֵּצֵא אֶת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נֹון וַיֹּאמֶר חֲזַק וְאַמֵץ כִּי אַתָּה תָּבִיא אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר
נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לָהֶם וְאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ:

G-d commanded Yehoshua bin Nun and He said, 'Be strong and courageous because you will bring B'nei Yisroel to the land that I promised them and I will be with you.'

⁶ Of course there is no suggestion that Moshe's comments 'prompted' G-d's memory. That thought would be heretical since G-d needs no prompting. G-d's memory is constant; it is His continuing and eternal awareness of all of Creation.

But, the fact that the Torah chose to write the four promises here, the *ארבע לשונות גאולה*, the four expressions of redemption, that is remarkable.

Why is it written in a way to appear that it is a response to Moshe Rabbenu?

Although these two instructions seem similar, Rashi already noted in the earlier verse that there is a profound difference between them.

He wrote above:

כי אתה תבוא את העם הזה - ארי את תיעול עם עמא הדין. משה אמר לו ליהושע, זקנים שבדור יהיו עמך הכל לפי דעתן ועצתן, אבל הקדוש ברוך הוא אמר ליהושע כי אתה תביא את בני ישראל אל הארץ אשר נשבעתי להם תביא על כרחם הכל תלוי ברך, טול מקל והך על קדקדן.

Because you will come with this people – [Onkelos renders this:] ‘You will enter with this people.’

Moshe said to Yehoshua, ‘the elders of the generation will be with you – all should be according to their opinion and counsel.

But G-d said to Yehoshua, ‘You will bring B’nei Yisroel to the land that I promised them.’ Bring them, even against their will. All is dependent upon you, Yehoshua. Take a stick and hit them on their heads.

Perhaps because of the fact that Moshe Rabbenu had an innate attitude, one that shunned imposing his opinion on others, we can understand why HaKodosh Boruch Hu objected to Moshe Rabbenu’s words when it was evident that his report on the plight of Israel was accurate.

We see that even after four decades of leadership, a lengthy period with many tumultuous events occurring in which Moshe Rabbenu was forced to impose his will on others, he still did not want those events to them become a pattern for his behavior or for his outlook on what was ideal leadership.

Thus, when handing over the reins of leadership to Yehoshua, Moshe told him that his leadership should be in consonance with the advice and guidance of the elders.

And this may be the crux of the Divine objections to Moshe’s reaction upon hearing the justified complaints of the officers of B’nei Yisroel.

Moshe Rabbenu was expected to assume the mantle of leadership for which he was appointed. He was expected not only to appreciate the fact that B’nei Yisroel were suffering. He was also expected to provide them with the guidance that was required when there was such suffering.

At such a low moment for those who were being afflicted by the Egyptian tyranny, it was not sufficient for their leader to recognize their plight. The leader was called upon to provide hope and inspiration.

If we would expect a leader to provide hope and inspiration in any situation, even if the leader thought that the outlook was bleak or impossible, in this situation with the promise of HaKodosh Boruch Hu being imminently fulfilled, certainly Moshe Rabbenu was required to encourage G-d's people with the better times that would await them soon.

It was Moshe's failure to do so that brought Divine displeasure. It was his failure to do so that brought the unfavourable comparison to the Ovos who did not see the realization of G-d's promises as indicated by His Name Hashem and yet were not discouraged by the lack of such realization.

Moshe certainly realized that Hashem's promise would be fulfilled, because that was his mission. It was his failure to transmit that sense to Israel for which he was held accountable as we shall see shortly.

Thus the reason why Hashem had to say *ולכן אמר לבני ישראל* is because you, Moshe, did not encourage them properly, I Hashem will have to tell you what you are to say to them. I Hashem will tell you what you must tell them since you did not do so on your own accord.

I Hashem will tell you what to tell them – but you should have told them on your own, without my command.

When we consider this explanation for the events that concluded last week's Parshas Sh'mos and began this week's Parshas Voera, we are reminded of an event that occurred centuries later but can easily be associated with our subject.

Shaul HaMelech was commanded to destroy Amalek. The Novi tells us that he did so –almost. He spared their king, *Agag*, and their flocks.

This is how the Novi tells us of what transpired. We read (Sh'muel I Perek 15/P'sukim 13-17):

וַיָּבֹא שְׁמוּאֵל אֶל שָׁאוּל וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ שָׁאוּל בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה לַיהוָה הַקִּימְתִי אֶת דְּבַר ה': וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל וּמָה קוֹל הַצֶּאֱן הַזֶּה בְּאָזְנִי וְקוֹל הַבְּקָר אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי שֹׁמֵעַ: וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁאוּל מִעֲמַלְקֵי הַבְּיָאוֹם אֲשֶׁר חָמַל הָעַם עַל מִיטַב הַצֶּאֱן וְהַבְּקָר לְמַעַן זָבַח לַיהוָה...לְקִיף וְאֶת הַיּוֹתֵר

הַחֲרָמָנוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל אֶל שָׁאוּל הֲרָף וְאֶגִּידָה לְךָ אֵת אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' אֵלַי הַלַּיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ דִּבֶּר: וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל הֲלוֹא אִם קָטַן אַתָּה בְּעֵינַיִךְ רֹאשׁ שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אַתָּה וַיִּמְשַׁחְךָ ה' לְמֶלֶךְ עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Sh'muel came to Shaul and Shaul said to Sh'muel, 'Blessed be you to G-d, I fulfilled the word of G-d.' Sh'muel said, 'What is this sound of sheep in my ears and the sound of cattle that I hear?' Shaul said, 'They brought them from the Amalekites that the people had mercy on the best sheep and cattle in order to bring an offer to Hashem your G-d; all of the rest we have destroyed.'

Sh'muel said to Shaul, 'Allow me and I will tell you what Hashem spoke to me this night', he said, 'speak'.

Sh'muel said, 'Although you are small in your eyes, you are the head of the tribes of Israel and Hashem anointed you as king over Israel.'

Now there is no intention here to say that Moshe Rabbenu sinned as did Shaul. Far be it from being considered.

On the other hand what Sh'muel told Shaul:

אִם קָטַן אַתָּה בְּעֵינַיִךְ רֹאשׁ שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אַתָּה וַיִּמְשַׁחְךָ ה' לְמֶלֶךְ עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל:

'If you are small in your eyes, you are the head of the tribes of Israel and Hashem anointed you as king over Israel.'

can certainly be seen as relevant here.

The exalted positions to which Moshe was catapulted, required him to go beyond his self-perception as being 'small' and assume the position of king that demands of its incumbent a vision of the future, a vision that holds hope and better times, a vision that should be communicated.

It is appropriate for a great person to exhibit true humility. Who was greater than Moshe Rabbenu when he exhibited the utmost humility when confronted by the inappropriate conversation regarding him that took place between his sister and brother, Miraim and Aharon?

There the Torah writes (B'midbar Perek 12/Posuk 3):

וְהָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה עֲנִיו מְאֹד מִכָּל הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה:

And the man Moshe was very humble, more than all the people on the face of the earth.

In *Bina L'I'tim*⁷ (D'rush 35) we find an elaboration upon the unique humility of great people.

Twice in Tanach we find the same special phrase used to praise great people. Once the praise is directed to Eliyahu HaNovi and the second time to his disciple, Elisha HaNovi.

We read first in Melachim (II Perek 2/Posuk 12) at the death of Eliyahu:

וְאֵלִישָׁע רָאָה וְהוּא מִצְעֵק אָבִי אָבִי רֶכֶב יִשְׂרָאֵל וּפָרָשָׁיו וְלֹא רָאָהוּ עוֹד וַיִּחְזַק בְּבִגְדָיו
וַיִּקְרַעֵם לְשְׁנַיִם קָרְעִים:

Elisha sees [Eliyahu's ascent] and he cries, 'My father, my father, chariot of Israel and its horsemen'; he saw him no longer and he grasped his clothes and he tore them into two tears.

We then read in regards to Elisha, at his impending demise. The Novi writes (ibid. Perek 13/Posuk 14):

וְאֵלִישָׁע חָלָה אֶת חָלְיוֹ אֲשֶׁר יָמוּת בּוֹ וַיֵּרֶד אֵלָיו יוֹאֵשׁ מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּבֶן עַל פְּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר
אָבִי אָבִי רֶכֶב יִשְׂרָאֵל וּפָרָשָׁיו:

Elisha became ill in the sickness from which he would die; Yoash King of Israel went down to him and he cried on Elisha's face and he said, 'My father, my father, chariot of Israel and its horsemen.'

Bina L'I'tim explains that these people were first addressed as אבי, my father, because they were truly the 'fathers of their times.

On the other hand they saw themselves as רכב, a vehicle and a means to help Israel, but they did not see themselves in their true selves as פרשיו, the true leaders who revealed the path for Israel to follow.

⁷ Rav Azaria Fizho, an early Acharon, was an outstanding Godol of his era. His Halachic commentary, *Gidulei Teruma* on Sefer HaTrumos, is basic source of Halacha in many fields.

Bina L'I'tim is a wonderful source of *D'rashos* on a wide range of subjects.

Perhaps this description would be apt for Moshe Rabbenu as well. Yet, there is certainly a difference.

Truly Moshe was a *Novi*. His *nevuah* was qualitatively and quantitatively greater than any other prophet before or after him⁸. If Moshe was only a prophet, perhaps these words would have been said about him as well.

But, Moshe was more than a prophet. He was a King⁹. As a king he was expected to set the tone and since he didn't he was reprimanded.

We correctly differentiate between 'empathy' and 'sympathy'. One who is a sympathizer, as sincere as he may be, is an outsider. He sees the other's suffering and is truly sorry for him.

On the other hand, that well-intentioned sympathy has a limited ability to assuage the suffering of the recipient of such condolences.

One who is suffering greatly will have a tendency to feel that the sympathy isn't sufficient because the outsider cannot truly understand what he is feeling and thus the expressions of pain and sorrow may do little to assuage the misery.

One who is in grief will find the verse in *Eicha* particularly meaningful. At its destruction Yerushalayim laments (Perek 1/Posuk 12):

לֹא אֵלֵיכֶם כָּל עֲבָרֵי דֶרֶךְ הַבֵּיטוּ וּרְאוּ אִם יֵשׁ מִכְּאוֹב כְּמִכְּאֹבִי אֲשֶׁר עוֹלַל לִי אֲשֶׁר הוֹגֵה
ה' בְּיוֹם חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ:

This should not befall you, passersby, look and see if there is pain like my pain that He brought to me, that Hashem thought of on the day of His anger.

Empathy on the other hand is an identification with the one who is suffering; he truly can feel the pain of the other.

Of course, empathy usually occurs when one person consoles another person because they have both suffered equally and from the same or similar experiences. It would be extreme for someone who was fortunate and not felt the same pain to empathize with the other. How could one do so?

⁸ See Rambam Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah Perek 8/Halachah 1.

⁹ See D'vorim Perek 33/Posuk 5 and Rashi there.

Of course, such was the *midda* of Moshe Rabbenu. Did we not read in last week's Parshas Sh'mos (Perek 2/Posuk 11):

וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הֵהֵם וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּצֵא אֶל אָחָיו וַיֵּרָא בְּסִבְלָתָם וַיֵּרָא אִישׁ מִצְרִי מַכֶּה אִישׁ
עִבְרִי מֵאָחָיו:

It was in those days that Moshe became an adult and he went out to his brethren and he saw their burdens and he saw an Egyptian man beating a Hebrew from his brethren.

Rashi writes:

וירא בסבלתם - נתן עיניו ולבו להיות מיצר עליהם:

He saw their burdens – He focused his eyes and his heart to be in pain for them.

Moshe Rabbenu knew that it was not sufficient for him to 'feel bad' for his brothers. It was not enough to *see* their plight. His *heart* had to feel what their heart was sensing. That is empathy.

However, for a King empathy is not enough. It is not sufficient to commiserate and to bring comfort to the one who suffers so that they feel the support of those who love him and truly care for him.

The King has to inspire. When Moshe did not inspire, and instead, because of his empathy, became their voice to G-d, he had partially failed in his task.

Moshe did not inspire on his own and thus, לכן, Hashem had to perform the task that Moshe had disregarded.

However, we still must ask ourselves, 'What was the Torah's purpose for telling us about this shortcoming of Moshe Rabbenu at that time?' Was the purpose to teach us that Moshe was human and fallible? That lesson is taught to us after *Mattan Torah*¹⁰ when our esteem for him is far greater than it is now. If after reaching the lofty heights to which he ascended, the Torah reminds us that every person has limitations, including Moshe Rabbenu, then it is easy to understand that he certainly had limitations at this pre-Sinai era.

¹⁰ The most powerful example is at *Mei Meriva* about which we read in Parshas Chukkas.

What I think that the Torah wants us to learn is how to be leaders from Moshe Rabbenu – both from his successes and from when he was not successful.

We are all called upon to be leaders. There are tasks in which we are involved where we have at least a partial say, if not one that is full. Whether it be in our work, our community or our family, we must demonstrate the type of leadership that goes beyond empathy.

The leadership that goes beyond empathy is one that heals. How does that healing take place? The sufferer is first convinced that others do understand their plight – but they are not left to wallow in it. They may be willing to take inspiration from someone who understands them. They will not be willing to take that encouragement from someone who doesn't understand them.

It is true that despite Moshe's proven empathy, when he finally brought inspiration and vision when he shared the **אור** של **אור** with them, he did not succeed, as was noted earlier:

ולא שמעו אל משה

They did not listen to Moshe.

And the lesson that we are taught is that despite our best attempts, we cannot always be successful because we can attempt to influence the other, but we do not control him.

However, there is one exception to the above, an exception by which we can not only influence but we can also control.

In Hebrew the word for leadership is **הנהגה**. We find a form of that term used with Moshe Rabbenu himself¹¹.

¹¹ The verse reads (Sh'mos Perek 3/Posuk 1):

וּמֹשֶׁה הָיָה רֹעֵה אֶת צֹאן יִתְרוֹ חֹתֵנוּ כִּי־הָיָה מֵדִיָּן וַיִּנְהֶג אֶת הַצֹּאן אַחֲרֵי הַמִּדְבָּר וַיָּבֵא אֶל הָר הַקָּדוֹשׁ... לִיקִים
חֹרֶב:

Moshe was shepherding the sheep of his father-in-law Yisro, the *Kohen* of Midian and he led the sheep after the wilderness and he came to the Mountain of G-d, to Chorev.

It is interesting to note that **וינהג** does not precisely mean 'he led'. When the Torah wishes to say that 'he led', it writes **ניהג**, in the *Binyan Pi'el* form, or as is used elsewhere as **הנהיג**, in the *Binyan Hif'il* form. Both *Pi'el* and *Hif'il* are causative.

And in Hebrew, that which we find already in the Midrashim, the term for personal behavior is מתנהג. This word is in the *Binyan Hispa'el* form and literally means 'to lead oneself'.

That is, each individual is a leader of him or herself. Each person has the capacity to set a tone for one's life, enriched with a vision, and make the necessary efforts to lead to the realization of that vision.

Who better can empathize with a person than him or herself? Who better can know the pain that one feels than the one who is suffering?

But at that moment, the recognition of pain, suffering and ordeal is not the endgame or the goal. It is an intermediate step towards solution and salvation.

Just like Moshe Rabbenu, the leader, was to have presented a vision and goal, a true and realistically positive outlook on life, so we in that leadership position over which we have the most control, must make that goal part of our life as well.

One may question this premise of an individual's ability to extricate himself from despair. Chazal teach us in many places¹²:

אין חבוש מתיר עצמו מבית האסורים.

The prisoner cannot free himself from prison.

This phrase is used literally and symbolically. Its symbolic usage is that when a person is locked up in a certain situation, he does not have the ability to free himself.

Seemingly, this would apply to our situation as well.

However, *Tikkunei Zohar* שישאה (22 b) teaches that this rule does not apply regarding *Teshuvah*. The penitent can free himself from his prison of sin.

However, וינהג that we find by Moshe is *Binyan Kal* which is not causative. It would seem that the precise translation of וינהג את הצאן was that 'he went directing the sheep', but not exactly leading them.

This is, of course, relevant to the theme that we are attempting to present.

¹² See, Masseches B'rachos 5 b for example,

Undoubtedly, the same is true when one becomes a victim that imprisons him in a state that seemingly freezes him and does not allow him to move, does not allow him to progress. And, of course, *Teshuvah* is progression and growth, moving forward properly.

However, the movement that is required in such a state is clearly one of repentance as well. It is literally *Teshuva*, returning to the status of a full-functioning human being, of a Jew who seeks to serve G-d always and to strive higher and higher.

That is what the Torah wishes to teach us from this model lesson of leadership.

We can focus on the instances over which we have the most control and about which too often we feel ourselves as being helpless.

The four expressions of redemption: **והוצאתי והצלתי וגאלתי ולקחתי** can be applied to ourselves.

When we raise ourselves from morass, from a sense of hopelessness to a sense of accomplishment and achievement, we can pray for the fulfilment of the fifth expression of redemption:

והבאתי

I Hashem will bring you.

If we choose to partner ourselves with HaKodosh Boruch Hu, if we exercise leadership over ourselves, than we will begin to move ourselves closer to G-d and He will take us the rest of the way on that journey towards Him.

Shabbat Shalom

Chodesh Tov

Rabbi Pollock