

D'var Torah: Parashat Va'eira

by Eli Shebson - Wednesday, January 02, 2019

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This week, the Chief Rabbi explains how each of us can achieve true greatness.

Has anyone been as great as Moshe?

In Parashat Va'eira the Torah presents us with a family background of the brothers Moshe and Aharon. These details conclude with the statement, "Hu Aharon U'Moshe" – Yes, that was the Aharon and Moshe who stood before the Egyptian king, Pharaoh.

And then in the very next verse the Torah says, "Hu Moshe V'Aharon" – Yes that was Moshe and Aharon.

I think the clear message here is that Aharon was considered to be as great as his brother Moshe: first it is 'Aharon and Moshe' and then it is 'Moshe and Aharon'.

But how could that have been possible, bearing in mind the incredible achievements of Moshe Rabbeinu in his life?

Rav Moshe Feinstein gives two wonderful explanations. In the first he tells us that Aharon's help and assistance to his brother made him as great as Moshe. Here we can recognise the value of what the 'backroom' people do – those who are the facilitators and the enablers. The ultimate result that is achieved by the person on the stage is equally theirs. That was the achievement of Aharon.

But Rav Moshe Feinstein gives a second great 'Peirush' – explanation. He tells us that Aharon achieved his own full personal potential.

So often, in our world, models are presented to us and people think, 'if only I could look like this person' or 'if only I could achieve what this person has achieved'.

But that is the wrong aspiration. Rather, we should be looking to ourselves and at our own potential and our own ability. We should be saying, 'if only I could be the real me and achieve my full potential'.

The Chassidic master, Rav Zusha was on his death bed. His Chasidim surrounded him and they noticed that he was deeply upset. They said, "You have achieved so much!" But yet he said, "Actually not. When I go to heaven the question the Almighty will pose to me will not be 'Zusha why were you not like Moshe?' But rather, 'Zusha why were you not like Zusha?'" And he went on to say "I certainly have not achieved my full potential."

This was the greatness of Aharon. Not that his ability could be compared to his brother Moshe. Rather, with regard to his potential, he actually attained the ultimate.

When the Almighty assess our endeavours and achievements what He values is not the rung of the ladder on which each of us is standing but rather where we started and how many rungs we have climbed.

Shabbat Shalom

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