



Celebrating Each Other

Rabbi Moshe Nachbar

Abby Bienenfeld ('26)

Victoria Tacher ('25)

Calev Zak ('25)

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The former Rosh Yeshiva of the Mirrer Yeshiva, Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel z"l, was an unparalleled *masmid*

and showed almost superhuman resilience and determination in learning and spreading Torah, even while facing the challenges of severe Parkinson's disease for much of his adult life. Through his efforts, guidance, and care the Mirrer Yeshiva grew five times larger, becoming the largest center of Torah in the world. Today, a visitor to the Yeshiva will be met by the roar of thousands of voices of learning, recital, and holy debate, like an enormous lion of fierce spiritual power. In addition to teaching and maintaining personal relationships with countless *talmidim*, the Rosh Yeshiva shouldered the financial responsibility of the entire enterprise, and became one of the greatest builders of Torah and Yiddishkeit in modern Jewish history.

Once, while at a wedding of a *talmid* at a hotel in Bayit Vegan, Jerusalem, Rav Nosson Tzvi heard that the hotel's rooftop lounge offered a sweep-

ing view of the entire city. Excitedly, he asked to go upstairs and take a look. Although in his advanced stages of Parkinson's disease where each and every step was a challenge, he threw incredible effort into walking, and after much time he arrived exhausted at the elevator. As he rested, a student accompanying the Rosh Yeshiva sought to understand his rebbe's intent: since when was he so interested in the view? Smiling ear to ear, Rav Nosson Tzvi explained, "Didn't you hear? Yeshivas Knesset Yisrael, 'the Chevron Yeshiva', is expanding their campus in Givat Mordechai! I've been davening for its successful completion for so long. I want to see their progress!" At the time, Rav Nosson Tzvi was wrestling with heavy debt from his own ambitious building projects and expansions — on top of the overwhelming financial burden of the many Mirrer institutions. Yet, he rejoiced triumphantly at the sight of another yeshiva's success.

In this week's parsha, as Moshe ascends to the leadership of Am Yisrael, he questions if he is right for the job; perhaps his older brother, Aharon is more deserving of this responsibility. But the Ribbono Shel Olam assured Moshe that he need not be concerned, as the Torah tells us

(Shemot 4:13-14):

וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי אֲדֹנָי שְׁלַח־נָא בְיַד־שָׁלַח:

“But he said, “Please, My God, send through whomever You will send...make someone else Your agent...”

וַיַּחֲרֹאֶף ה' בְּמֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלֹא אֶהְרֶן אֶחָיוֹ הֲלֹוֹ יִדְעָתִי כִּי־דֹבֵר

יְדִבֵּר הוּא וְגַם הִנֵּה־הוּא יֵצֵא לְקִרְאָתְךָ וְרָאֶה וְשָׂמַח בְּלִבּוֹ:

“Hashem became angry with Moshe and said, “There is your brother Aharon...He, I know, speaks readily. Even now he is setting out to meet you, and he will be happy to see you.”

Rashi translates the bolded phrase and confirms that Aharon was genuinely happy for his brother and celebrated his success. The Midrash Rabbah says, “They would both rejoice in one another’s greatness (achievements).” Together, Moshe and Aharon are role models of brothers who complement one another and work together. They had the admirable *middah* of “*firgun*” – a trait of genuine, unselfish delight and pride in the accomplishments of the other.

Moshe wished for his older brother Aharon to lead, while Aharon deferred to his younger brother, Moshe. They covered for one another and wished one another success. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai reveals that in merit of Aharon’s *firgun*, rejoicing over his brother’s achievements, he merited to wear the Urim v’Tumim, the breastplate of the Kohen Gadol: “The heart that rejoiced over the greatness of his brother was given the joy of being adorned with the breastplate upon which was inscribed the names of all of Am Yisrael.”

It is no mistake that our redemption from Egypt manifested through two brothers who worked together in harmony. They had different roles but they considered each other equals, not competitors. This is a lesson for us as well: when we are confident in ourselves and comfortable with our role in the world, we can be *m’fargein*, happy that our brothers and friends are successful. The Rambam, in Sefer haMitzvot (Mitzvah 206), defines this quality as a core Jewish value: “Whatever I wish for myself, I should wish the same for the other person.”

Hashem should bless us so that we may be

elevated above a perception of inner lack which drives jealousy and competitiveness. We should all be *zoche* to see the awesome panoramic view of the goodness and pleasantness of our people. May we celebrate one another’s achievements and successes. May we bask in each other’s triumphs like the great Rav Nosson Tzvi z”l and our beloved teachers, Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon Hakohen.

Staying True to Yourself

Abby Bienenfeld (‘26)

This week’s parsha starts off with Hashem naming the people who came down to Mitzrayim. The pasuk states:

“וַיְהִי כִלְנֶפֶשׁ יֵצְאֵי יִרְדְּיָעֶקֶב שִׁבְעִים נָפֶשׁ וַיֹּסֶף הָיָה בְּמִצְרַיִם”
“the total number of Yaakov’s descendants was 70 and Yosef was in Mitzrayim (Shemot 1:5)”

This pasuk seems strange because we already know that Yosef was in Mitzrayim, so why would the Torah need to specify that? Rashi’s answer to this question is that the pasuk repeats that Yosef is in Egypt to emphasize to us that this is the same Yosef Hatzadik as before, and being in Egypt did not change his personality or values. When the Torah says Yosef was in Mitzrayim, it is referring to Yosef’s righteousness staying the same, even though he was in Mitzrayim. Yosef was just a shepherd for his fathers sheep and then became second in command to the king in Egypt, but, despite his change in status, his righteousness remained constant.

There is an important lesson that we can learn from this pasuk. The fact that the Torah needed to specify that Yosef’s righteousness was the same now as it had been before shows that it is very possible that his righteousness could have changed. The Torah is commending Yosef for staying the same person with the same Jewish values even when he was no longer living with the rest of his Jewish family. Staying true to yourself is hard when everyone around you acts, speaks, and dresses differently than you, but it is nonetheless important. Being influenced by our surroundings is very easy but Yosef teaches us the importance of sticking to our values and Jewish identities.

This is a relevant lesson for us nowadays because we do not live in Israel and we are still in exile. However, we must be like Yosef and maintain our Judaism and righteousness no matter where we live or who we are surrounded by.

Fighting Fire with Fire

Victoria Tacher ('25)

In this week's parsha, Shemot, we find ourselves at a critical point in the narrative of the Jewish people. The once-favored descendants of Yaakov are now enslaved in the land of Egypt. Pharaoh, threatened by the rapid growth of the Jewish people's population, imposes harsh labor upon them. Amidst this oppression, a hero emerges: Moshe. One of the striking aspects of this parsha is the transformation of Moshe from a humble shepherd into the leader chosen by Hashem to free the Jewish people. The burning bush **הַר חַרְבֵּה** serves as a powerful symbol of this transformation. Moshe encounters a bush that burns but is not consumed, a metaphor for the resilience of the Jewish people enduring suffering yet remaining unconquered. Reflecting on this, we learn a profound lesson about leadership and resilience. Moshe hesitates when called to lead. He questions his worthiness and abilities. However, Hashem reassures him, reminding us that true leadership often arises from a place of humility and self-awareness.

In our own lives, we may face challenges that seem insurmountable, moments when we feel consumed by the flames of adversity. Parshat Shemot encourages us to draw strength from Moshe's journey. Leadership is not about being perfect or without doubt; it is about stepping forward with humility and a willingness to learn and grow. Furthermore, the name of this parsha, Shemot – “names” – emphasizes the significance of identity. Each Jew is counted and known by name, reinforcing the importance of individuality within the collective. In times of hardship, it is essential to recognize and honor the dignity of every individual, acknowledging their unique strengths and contributions. As we read Parshat Shemot, let us reflect on the burning bushes in our own lives, the moments of challenge and self-doubt that can ultimately lead to personal and communal growth. Let us strive to be leaders in our communities, embracing our unique identi-

ties and recognizing the inherent worth of each individual. This Shabbos, may we be inspired to confront the flames in our lives with resilience, humility, and commitment.

The Humility to Lead

Calev Zak ('25)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Shemot, we are introduced to arguably the most significant figure in Jewish history and certainly the greatest leader in Jewish history, Moshe Rabbeinu. The first story we hear happens when Moshe sees an Egyptian man beating a Jew. Interestingly, when he sees these abuses, before he does anything about the situation, the Torah says that **“וַיִּפֶּן כֹּה וְכֹה”** – “he turned this way and that.” Remember, this is the greatest leader of all time seeing a horrible situation that he knows someone needs to do something about, and he's hesitating before he acts? Furthermore, at the burning bush and throughout his life, Moshe is constantly hesitant to be the one to take the reins and lead, and he even needs to be convinced by Hashem to do so. How is Moshe's hesitancy to lead something that we can learn from? Don't we all strive to be leaders?

In reality, Moshe is not teaching us to not be leaders, but rather teaching us a very important lesson about the nature of leadership itself. To be a leader, you don't always have to be the one in charge or in the spotlight, and sometimes an underrated form of leadership is allowing others to lead at the same time. For example, a couple of years ago there was a viral YouTube video taken on a college campus of a shirtless man dancing crazily on a field with hundreds of people around him, many of whom were laughing at him. At this point, the man is not a leader, he's just a crazy guy in a field. Then, another man decides to join him, dancing in this crazy way with everyone watching, so now there are two crazy guys dancing in a field. Shortly after, two girls run up to them and join in, and then another small group of people, and then another and another until there are literally hundreds of people wildly dancing in this random field on a college campus. Now, a movement has been created with hundreds of people taking part, and the people who had formerly laughed at him were now a part of his dance. But who was

the leader? The first guy who started dancing? He was just a crazy guy by himself until the second guy joined him! So was the second guy the leader? The third? The fourth? The answer that Moshe was also trying to teach us is that being the first to act is not always the best or definitive way to lead. We always need to be looking out for our opportunity to make a difference in this world and recognize that it might not always appear in the most obvious form. Have an amazing Shabbos!

The Reward for Your Efforts

Avi Harris ('26)

In this week's parsha, Parsha Shemot, the Jewish midwives played a very crucial role in saving Jewish boys and devoted their whole lives to nursing and helping parents raise their kids. These midwives made a simple, yet profound impact on society at the time. The Torah explains how Hashem recognized these midwives for their efforts:

וַיִּטֵּב אֱלֹקִים לַמִּיֻּלֶּדֶת וַיִּרְבּוּ הָעָם וַיַּעֲצֻמוּ מְאֹד:

“And God rewarded the midwives, and the people multiplied and became very strong” (Shemot 2:20).

The simple question here is, how did Hashem really reward the midwives? What could Hashem do to really show his appreciation for them? Rav Moshe Feinstein gives an amazing answer to show that hard work truly pays off. After spending countless hours doing one job to help the Jewish nation, there is no better reward than to see how your hard work pays off. Because of this, Hashem made it so that these midwives saw the Jews multiply and the nation growing. Simply risking their lives each day to see the Jewish nation grow and actually seeing them multiply is the greatest gift these midwives could ask for. Imagine being a doctor who dedicates his whole life to finding a cure to cancer. The best reward you could ever possibly ask for is to find the cure! This is the exact thing that happened to the midwives. A life lesson that can be learned from this is that Hashem sees the amount of dedication a person puts toward earning a goal, and once that person does their best, Hashem will really do the rest.

Good Shabbos.



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