



Parshat HaShavuah

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VA'ERA

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# Ashreinu

חלקינו מה טוב

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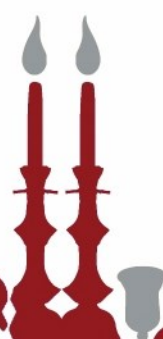
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Motzei  
Shabbat

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Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

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*Sponsored in memory of Lana D. Goldberg*

## HUMAN HEROES RABBI AVI HOCHMAN

It's all about placement! Your position on the team, your job in the group assignment, or your part in the play—each of these

plays a significant role in making sure the job gets done. The Torah works the same way. Every pasuk and perek in the Torah is in its place for a significant reason: to shed light on our ancestors' lives and convey a specific message to its readers. If that is the case, then this week's parsha has a major placement dilemma!

As we are reaching the major confrontation between Moshe, Aharon, and Pharaoh, all of a sudden, the Torah (Shmot 6:14) digresses to discuss the lineage of Moshe and Aharon.

Why does the Torah give us a discourse about the lineage of Moshe and Aharon at this dramatic moment in the story? Wouldn't it have been more appropriate to have placed these pesukim at the beginning of Sefer Shmot, when Moshe is first introduced? Why now?

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch offers a beautiful and enlightening solution to this conundrum. He explains that up until this point of the story, Moshe and Aharon's efforts have been met with frustration and failure. From this point on, they will begin to triumph. Hashem will begin to perform the miracles and supernatural events to help them lead the Jewish people out of Mitzrayim. Therefore, says Rav Hirsch, right before that moment the Torah wants to make something very clear to each and everyone of us.

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## FEELING SYMPATHY

### TAMAR TANGIR ('17)

This week's parsha begins with Moshe overcoming his fear of speaking to Pharaoh in an attempt to convince Pharaoh to free the Jews from slavery. As we all know, Pharaoh immediately refuses this plea, and instead he increases the Jews' suffering and continues to terrorize them. After this, the plagues start.

The first plague is the switching of blood and water. Rivers, oceans, and all bodies of water transform into deadly, red blood. This is a devastating act that affects all Egyptian men, women, children, and animals. The Egyptians are mortified, surprised, and quite confused by this miracle, especially since it is the first plague and totally unexpected. In addition to the obvious horror of the plague itself, the pasuk explains that Pharaoh "did not take this to heart," meaning that he does not care about the fact that his own people are suffering.

There are many commentaries that try to explain what Pharaoh means when he says that he does not care. Isn't the plague affecting him too? The answer is no. According to the midrash, Pharaoh is not personally affected by this plague and therefore does not show sympathy towards his people. In direct contrast to Pharaoh, Moshe, who grows up segregated from Bnei Yisrael, feels the pain of his people and wants to help them every way possible.

From here we learn that when we see a fellow Jew suffering, even if we are not personally experiencing his difficulties, we have to have empathy. We have to make an effort to understand his situation and feel his agony. By recognizing this, it shall motivate us to be like Moshe and help one another.

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## BLOCKED LIPS

### YAACOV SIEV ('15)

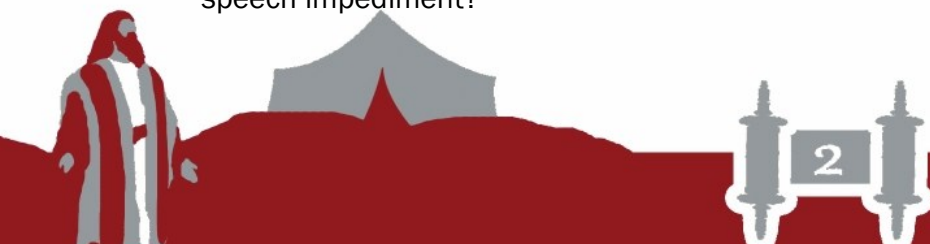
Throughout the parsha, we see Moshe constantly trying to shine the spotlight on someone else. He brings reason after reason (or perhaps excuse after excuse) as to why he is unfit for this great mission of leading Bnei Yisrael.


One of Moshe's complaints is that he is *aral sfatayim*, has blocked lips. In response to this impediment, which Moshe presents as a reason for his inability to lead the nation, Hashem assigns Aharon to join Moshe as a "mouth and an interpreter" (Rashi, Shmot 6:13).

The first part of Rashi is easily understood. Moshe has a speech impediment, and therefore feels that he will not be a good candidate to talk to Pharaoh. Aharon will act as a "mouth." But why does Rashi mention that Aharon will act as an interpreter as well?

Moshe grows up in the house of Pharaoh. Doesn't Moshe know Egyptian? He probably even knows a lot more Egyptian than Aharon does. So then why is Aharon needed as an interpreter? Also, why does the Torah use the strange words "blocked lips" to describe Moshe's speech impediment?

*Continued page 3*





*Siev continued*

Even when Moshe is in Egypt living in the royal palace, the Torah tells us that Moshe goes out among his brothers and joins them in their pain. He tries to carry the burden with them and to suffer with his people. However, it cannot be denied that although he tries to feel his brothers' pain, it is not the same. He has grown up in royalty; his brothers have grown up in slavery. He is on the other side of the fence, looking in. And although one can always try and identify with another, he can never truly put himself in that person's shoes. This is Moshe's problem.

Rashi explains earlier (6:12) that the language of *aral*, blocked, connotes being covered and impeded. What does it mean that Moshe has “blocked lips”? It means that there is a separation—a block—between Moshe and Bnei Yisrael. Moshe is unable to completely identify with his people because of the time Moshe has spent in the royal palace and in Midian. Moshe cannot talk to Bnei Yisrael because there is not only a physical speech gap between them, but it is also as if there is something covering his lips, something separating him from them. His lips are blocked, which is why he needs Aharon as an interpreter—not to interpret between Moshe and Pharaoh, but rather as an interpreter between Moshe and Bnei Yisrael. With Aharon as his “mouth and interpreter,” Moshe is able to connect to both Pharaoh and Bnei Yisrael.

We are all different people with different backgrounds and personalities. Many times we forget that fact, and instead we judge others without even attempting to put ourselves in their shoes. Only Hashem can truly judge. Only Hashem can know the inner workings of an individual. It is only in our power to judge favorably.

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## KEEPING THE PROMISE

ANDREW BRONNER ('15)

At the beginning of this week's parsha, Hashem appears to Moshe and says, "I will take you out from the suffering of Egypt, and I will deliver you from their bondage; I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you to Myself as a nation, and I will be to you a G-d..." (Exodus 6:6-7). The question that bothers me is: aren't all of these promises awfully similar? Why would Hashem seemingly repeat Himself?

I believe that this issue can easily be resolved by finding nuances in each promise. Multiple commentaries state that when Hashem says, "I will take you out from the suffering in Egypt, and I will deliver you from their bondage," He is referring to the Jews physically leaving Egypt in the short term. But when Hashem says, "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments," He refers to the decimation of the Egyptian army so that the Egyptians will not be able to fight against Bnei Yisrael in the long term.

*Continued page 4*



*Bronner continued*

The Maharal explains that when Hashem says, “I will take you to Myself as a nation, and I will be to you a G-d,” it means Hashem promises that He will never let us be slaves again. Through all the harsh persecutions that we, as a nation, have faced over the centuries, Hashem has never allowed us to sink back to the level we were on when we were slaves in Egypt. Each of Hashem’s promises means something different, and He, as always, fulfilled each and every promise.

*Rabbi Hochman continued*

Moshe and Aharon are of “absolutely human origin and the absolutely ordinary human nature of their beings should be firmly established.” (Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, Shemot 6:14)

What is a hero? In Judaism we recognize our heroes as ordinary human beings. Pagans deified their heroes and therefore were able to worship them, but they could not emulate them. We view our heroes as people that we can aspire to model ourselves after.

The Torah goes out of its way at this point in time to let us know that Moshe and Aharon were as human as can be, and yet they were able to take action and become heroes to the entire Jewish people.

We often look around and see great Torah giants or tremendous *ba’alei chesed*, and think to ourselves, “they were made for that, but I can never be like that, that is not who I am.” The Torah is teaching us that every single Jewish hero starts the same way. We all have flaws and experience difficult situations that could prevent us from achieving greatness, but we should never tell ourselves that we can’t be a hero for someone or something. It is only a question of to how we choose to direct our efforts and how hard we want to push ourselves.

These heroes were “average Joes,” but took it upon themselves to do something great. We should never doubt our ability to become heroes and change the world around us.

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