



RABBI SHALOM

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Achieving One's Potential

In Parashat Va'eira, we encounter a subtle but striking detail. Two adjacent *pesukim* appear to repeat the same phrase, yet reverse the order of the names they mention. In Shemot 6:26 the Torah states: הוא אהרן ומֹשֶׁה - Aharon's name appears first. But in the very next *pasuk* (6:27) it states: מֹשֶׁה ואֶהֱרֹן, placing Moshe's name before Aharon's. Why does the Torah reverse their order in consecutive *pesukim*?

Rashi offers a well-known explanation:

יש מקומות שמהם אהרן למשה ויש מקומות שמהם משה לאהרן - ללמדך ששקולין כ אחד.

Sometimes the Torah places Aharon first and sometimes Moshe first, to teach that **they were equal**.

This comment immediately raises a difficulty. How can Aharon be considered *equal* to Moshe? The Torah itself declares ישראל "לא קם בישראל" - no prophet ever reached Moshe's level. The Rambam includes this principle

as one of the **13 Ikkarim**: Moshe Rabbeinu's *nevu'ah* stands alone. So how could Rashi imply that Aharon and Moshe were equals?

Several *mefarshim* resolve this tension. One possibility is that Moshe achieved his unparalleled status only at Sinai; until that point, he and Aharon were comparable.

Rav Moshe Feinstein (Drash Moshe), however, offers a deeper insight. Moshe was unique, but *Aharon fulfilled his own potential* just as perfectly as Moshe fulfilled his. What the Torah equates is not their abilities or accomplishments, but their **achievement of personal shleimut** - their complete realization of what *they* were meant to become.

True greatness is not measured by comparison to others. It is measured by whether a person becomes the best version of himself or herself, with the tools, challenges, and opportunities Hashem has given.

Often we look at others and think, "They have so much they need to fix," or "They're not as accomplished as this or that person." What we fail to see is the inner world of each individual - the struggles that are invisible to us, the obstacles that we do not face, the victories that no one else witnesses. Our job is not to measure others, but to build ourselves, step by step, toward the unique mission Hashem has placed on our shoulders.

The Gemara (Bava Batra 12b) relates the story of Rav Yosef, who fell ill and became unconscious. When he awakened, his father asked him what he had seen. Rav Yosef replied, "I saw an upside-down world: those who were high here were low there, and those who were low here



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were high there.” His father gently corrected him: “You did not see an upside-down world. You saw the world of truth.”

In this world, human eyes often admire quantity—how much Torah someone learned, how many mitzvot they performed. But in the world of truth, Hashem measures effort, struggle, and the fulfillment of potential. A person who quietly battles their inner challenges may stand far higher in the next world than someone who seems to accomplish more externally.

A well-known story about **Rav Zusha of Anipoli** illustrates this beautifully. As he lay on his deathbed, he wept. His students tried to comfort him: “Rebbe, you were as righteous as Avraham, as holy as Moshe!”

Rav Zusha responded: “*When I stand before the Heavenly Court, they will not ask me, ‘Why weren’t you Avraham? Why weren’t you Moshe?’ They will ask, ‘Why weren’t you **Zusha**?’*”

Becoming the Person Hashem Meant You to Be

This is the message of Moshe and Aharon standing side by side, their names alternating in order: Greatness is not defined by comparison, but by authenticity. Moshe became Moshe; Aharon became Aharon - and each reached perfection within his own mission.

The Torah is teaching us that the truest measure of a life is not how it stacks up against someone else’s, but whether we rise to the heights that *we*, and only *we*, were created to reach.

May we learn to look inward rather than sideways, to embrace our unique strengths, confront our unique challenges, and strive each day to become the person Hashem intended us to be.


May we merit to live as the best version of ourselves and to fulfill the holy potential placed within us. ■

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