



THE SNAKE THAT SWALLOWED MOSES

What did Moses do to deserve this?
And how did a woman save the day again?

TEACHER'S MANUAL



JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



PARSHAT SHEMOT

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When Moses was on his way to redeem the Jews from Egypt, a serpent swallowed him and sought to kill him. The reason for this was his negligence in not circumcising his son, Eliezer.

The Rebbe asks: How could Moses be punished with death? If he were to die, his mission to redeem the Jews would be nullified!

An Attempted Answer: Jacob feared Esau and prayed for his safety, despite a clear promise from G-d to protect him. He was afraid because he worried that he might have since sinned, and thereby forfeited the promise. The same can be suggested here: Moses' negligence in the mitzvah of circumcision could be considered a sin, potentially jeopardizing the mission assigned to him by G-d.

Refutation: The promise to Jacob was given to him as an individual, and such a promise could theoretically be revoked due to sin. However, in the case of a public mission to redeem an entire nation, it is unreasonable to assume that Moses' personal actions would jeopardize the salvation of the entire Jewish people.

Another Question: The Torah does not recount every event in Moses' life, but only those with a lesson for us. (For example, it does not tell us what Moses did from when he fled Egypt until he returned at age 79 to redeem the Jews.) If so, what lesson can we derive from this seemingly negative story of the snake swallowing Moses?

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The Rebbe explains: Rashi, quoting Rabbi Yose, hints at the solution. In an earlier story in this Torah portion, when Moses repeatedly refuses to accept the mission, Rabbi Yose explains that G-d became angry and punished him by not appointing him as the High Priest, as initially intended, leaving him only the role of a Levite. The same principle applies here: Even though the mission to redeem the Jews was initially assigned to Moses, it is possible that due to a certain issue, the mission could have been taken from him and given to Aaron to fulfill instead.

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This story teaches us several lessons:

1. We should not delay or neglect a mitzvah, thinking that no harm will be done by postponing it. A small mistake can lead to far greater consequences.
2. At the same time, a person who has already failed is not beyond hope, and can still be saved.
3. The greatness of Jewish women: Zipporah, who saved Moses' life, also ensured the success of his great mission to save the Jewish people.

Introduction

In the lesson before us, we delve into a lesser-known story, often overlooked amidst the dramatic events that open the book of Exodus. These brief few moments risked Moses' mission and leadership—something that could have altered the course of history entirely. What might appear to be a minor episode emerges as a significant event, teaching us an important and timeless message.

השיעור לחומש שמות

משיחת שבת פרשת שמות, כ"ה טבת,
מברכים החודש שבט, ה'תשל"ג.
הנחה בלתי מוגה.
תורת מנחם כרך ע"א עמוד 37

A. The Snake That Swallowed Moses

In this week's Torah reading, we read how G-d reveals Himself to Moses at Mount Sinai, where Moses was tending sheep, and commands him to return to Egypt to redeem the Jewish people. Moses takes his family, mounts them on a donkey, and sets out toward Egypt. Along the way, a grave and shocking incident occurs.

Source 1 Exodus 4:20-26

Student's
pg. 1

Moses took his wife and sons and set them on the donkey and they returned to the land of Egypt. Moses took G-d's staff in his hand.

G-d said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see all the signs that I have placed in your hand and perform them before Pharaoh. but I will strengthen Pharaoh's heart, and he will not send out the people. You shall say to Pharaoh, 'So said G-d, "My firstborn son is Israel." ' So I say to you, 'Send out My son so that he will worship Me. If you refuse to send him out, behold, I am going to slay your firstborn son.' "

At a lodging place on the way, G-d encountered Moses and sought to kill him.

וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת
בָּנָיו וַיִּרְכָּבָם עַל הַחֲמֹר וַיָּשֻׁב
אֶרֶצָה מִצְרַיִם וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת
מִטֵּה הָאֱלֹקִים בְּיָדוֹ.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּלָכְתְּךָ
לָשׁוּב מִצְרַיִם רְאֵה כָל־
הַמִּפְתִּים אֲשֶׁר־שַׁמְתִּי בְיָדְךָ
וַעֲשִׂיתָם לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה וְאֲנִי
אֲחַזֵּק אֶת־לְבָבוֹ וְלֹא יִשְׁלַח אֶת־
הָעָם: וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה כֹּה
אָמַר יְהוָה בְּנִי בְכֹרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
וְאָמַר אֵלַיךְ שְׁלַח אֶת־בְּנִי
וְיַעֲבֹדֵנִי וְתִמְאַץ לְשַׁלְּחוֹ הַגֵּוֹ
אֲנִכִּי הֲרֹג אֶת־בְּנֶךָ בְּכֹרֶךָ:

וַיְהִי בַדֶּרֶךְ בְּמִלּוֹן וַיִּפְגְּשֵׁהוּ ה'
וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַמָּיִתוֹ.

Rashi

Student's
pg. 1

Sought to kill him: The angel wished to kill Moses because he had not circumcised his son Eliezer. Because he was careless, he was liable to be punished with death.

וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַמָּיִתוֹ
(המלאך ל) מֹשֶׁה: לָפִי
שֶׁלֹא מָל אֶת אֱלִיעֶזֶר
בְּנוֹ, וְעַל שֶׁנִּתְרַשַּׁל
נֶעֱנַשׁ מִיָּתוֹ.

Student's
pg. 1

Rabbi Yose said: G-d forbid! Moses was not careless about circumcision. Moses reasoned: "Shall I circumcise him and then embark on the journey? It will be dangerous for the child until three days pass. Shall I circumcise him and wait three days? G-d commanded me, 'Go, return to Egypt.' " Why then was Moses liable to be punished with death? Because he first busied himself with the details of his lodging.

Student's
pg. 2

The angel turned into a sort of serpent and swallowed Moses from his head to his thighs, and then spit him out and swallowed him from his feet to his private parts. Zipporah therefore understood that it was because of the failure to perform the circumcision.

תנ"א אמר רבי יוסי: חס ושלום, לא נתרשל. אלא אמר, "אמול ואצא לדרך? סכנה היא לתינוק עד שלוש שנים. אמול ואשקה ג' ימים? הקב"ה צוני לך שב מצרים". ומפני מה נענש? לפי שנתעסק במלון תחלה.

במסכת נדרים: והיה המלאך נעשה כמין נחש ובו לעו מראשו ועד רגליו וחוזהו ובו לעו מרגליו ועד אותו מקום, הבינה צפורה שבשביל המילה הוא.

Student's
pg. 2

Zipporah took a sharp stone and severed her son's foreskin and cast it to his feet, and she said, "For you are a bridegroom of blood to me."

ותקח צפורה צר ותכרת את ערלת בנה ותגע לרגליו ותאמר כי חתן דמים אתה לי.

Rashi

Student's
pg. 2

Cast to his feet: Before Moses' feet.

She said: Regarding her son.

For you are a bridegroom of blood to me: You were a cause that my bridegroom would almost be murdered. You are to me the slayer of my bridegroom.

ותגע לרגליו. השליכתו לפני רגליו של משה. ותאמר. על בנה.

כי חתן דמים אתה לי. אתה הייתה גורם להיות החתן שלי נרצח עליך – הורג אישי אתה לי.

Student's
pg. 2

He released him. Then she said, "A bridegroom of blood concerning the circumcision."

וירף ממנו אז אמרה חתן דמים למוילת:

Rashi

Student's
pg. 2

Released: The angel released Moses, and then she understood that the angel came concerning the circumcision.

וירף. המלאך ממנו. אז הבינה שעל המילה בא להרגו.

>> The Rebbe

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pg. 3

This week's Torah portion relates that after G-d sent Moses to tell Pharaoh to let the Jewish people out of Egypt, "at a lodging place on the way G-d met Moses and sought to kill him." Rashi explains, "[G-d sought to kill] Moses, because he did not circumcise his son Eliezer at eight days. Because he was careless, he was liable to be punished with death."

This doesn't seem to make sense. G-d sent Moses to tell Pharaoh in his name, "send out My son [referring to the Jewish people who are called 'G-d's firstborn son'] so that he will worship Me." If G-d would kill Moses His entire mission would be aborted.

Perhaps we can answer this question based on Rashi's commentary on Jacob's prayer, "Save me from the hand of my brother Esau . . . You have said I will surely do good with you and make your descendants as numerous as the sands of the sea." A similar question can be asked on this verse—why did Jacob need to pray for G-d to save him from Esau if G-d had promised him earlier that He will protect him. Rashi explains that Jacob was saying, "I am afraid that since you made this promise to me I was tarnished by sin, and this will cause me to be handed over into Esau's hand." Similarly, we can suggest that by failing to circumcise Eliezer Moses sabotaged G-d's mission.

בפרשת השבוע מסופר שלאחר שהקב"ה שלח את משה לילך לפרעה ולומר לו לשלח את בני ישראל ממצרים - "ויהי בדרך במלון ויפגשוהו ה' ויבקש המיתו",¹ "למשה, לפי שלא מל את אליעזר בנו (לשמונה ימים), ועל שנתרשל נענש עונש מיתה".²

ולכאורה אין הדבר מובן כלל: הרי הקב"ה שלח את משה לומר לפרעה (בשליחותו של מקום) "שלח את בני (בני בכורי ישראל) ויעבדני",³ ואם הקב"ה ימיתו, לא תוכל להתקיים שליחותו של הקב"ה!?

לכאורה אפשר לתרץ על פי פירוש רש"י בפרשת וישלח, בנוגע לתפלת יעקב "הצילני נא מיד אחי מיד עשו וגו' ואתה אמרת היטב איטיב עמך ושמתי את זרעך כחול הים וגו'"⁴ - כי לכאורה אינו מובן: מדוע הוצרך יעקב להתפלל להקב"ה שיצילנו מיד עשו, הרי הקב"ה כבר הבטיח לו לשמרו כו' - "אני ירא שמא משהבטחתי נתלכלכתי בחטא ויגרום לי להימסר ביד עשו".⁵ ועל דרך זה יש לומר בנדון דידן, שבגלל שלא מל את אליעזר, קלקל והפריע לקיום השליחות של הקב"ה.

4. לב, יב-יג.
5. פרש"י שם, יא.

1. פרשתנו ד, כד.
2. פרש"י עה"פ.
3. שם, כב-כג.

In the book of Genesis, we read about Jacob, who was greatly afraid of his brother Esau, who was coming to kill him, and prayed to G-d, saying, "Save me!" This raises a question: What was Jacob afraid of? After all, G-d had promised to protect him. The answer is that, while G-d had indeed promised, Jacob feared that due to his sins, he might no longer be worthy of that protection, and so he prayed.

From this, we learn that even when there is a clear promise from G-d, it is possible for it not to be fulfilled because of a particular sin.

Perhaps this can be applied to our case as well. True, G-d had just sent Moses to redeem the Jews from Egypt, and seemingly, Moses should have been protected. However, it is possible that a severe sin, such as negligence in performing the mitzvah of circumcision, could have jeopardized both the divine protection and his mission.

Student's
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But this answer isn't viable. The concern of "I am afraid that since you made this promise to me I was tarnished by sin" is only relevant to the personal affairs of Jacob and his family. But in our case of the Divine mission to instruct Pharaoh to release the Jewish people from Egypt it can't be that Moses's conduct in the personal matter of Eliezer's circumcision should sabotage the Divine mission that concerns 600,000 Jews. The question therefore remains, how is it possible that G-d sought to kill Moses while there was a Divine mission for him to fulfill.

אבל באמת אי אפשר לומר כן, כי, החשש "שמא משהבטחתי נתלכתי בחטא ויגרום לי כו'", שייך רק בנוגע להבטחה על ענין פרטי שנוגע ליעקב או למשפחתו, אבל כשמדובר אודות השליחות להורות לפרעה להוציא את בני ישראל ממצרים, אי אפשר לומר שהנהגת משה בענין פרטי (שלא מל את אליעזר) תקלקל ותפריע למילוי השליחות של הקב"ה שנוגעת לששים ריבוא מישראל, כך, שנשארת השאלה איך יתכן ש"יבקש המיתו", בה בשעה שצריך לקיים את השליחות של הקב"ה.

The Rebbe explains that there is a fundamental difference. In Jacob's case, the promise was a personal one, made to him and his family. Such a promise could indeed be revoked due to sin.

However, Moses was sent to save an entire nation! It is difficult to argue that a private sin could revoke a mission of such magnitude.

(While it is true that Jacob's family ultimately connects to the 600,000 souls of Israel, this was still a potential reality, not an actual one. In contrast, Moses was directly needed, in actual terms, to save an entire nation.)

Student's
pg. 4

This is a question that bothers the beginner student, so Rashi must address this, and do so in a way that fits in with a simple reading of the verses.

וכיון שזהו דבר המוקשה אצל בן חמש למקרא, מוכרח רש"י להבהיר זאת, ודוקא בפשטות הכתובים.

What's The Lesson?

Student's
pg. 4

Another point we need to explain: What lesson can we learn from this event of G-d seeking to kill Moses on the road?

By way of introduction:

At the time he addressed Pahraoh, Moses was 80 years old. It follows that at the time of the event in our Torah portion he was approximately 79. Clearly, Moses must have experienced a number of significant life events before this point. Why then, asks the beginner student, does the Torah relate so little about this entire period of Moses's life?

Moses was forced to flee Egypt when he was still a "young man" (according to the Abarbanel, around the age of twenty). He returned to Egypt to redeem the Jewish people at the age of seventy-nine. What did he do during those sixty years?

The Torah provides only brief details: he met Jethro's daughters in Midian, married Zipporah, and had two sons. (Abarbanel notes that his marriage to Zipporah occurred when he was around seventy.) So, what happened to Moses between the ages of twenty and seventy?

The Midrash recounts that during those years, Moses became the king of Cush and led significant military campaigns.

Why, then, does the Torah not mention any of this?

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The beginner student's teacher will explain that the Torah isn't a story book relating the events of the lives of holy people. "The Torah that Moses commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Yaakov," so every matter that the Torah relates is for the purpose of teaching us a lesson. This is why the Torah doesn't relate all of the earlier events in Moses's life, because they don't have a lesson to teach us.

גם צריך להבין: מהי ההוראה שיכולים ללמוד מהענין של "ויהי בדרך גו' ויבקש המיתו?"

ובהקדמה:

כיון שבדברו אל פרעה היה משה בן שמונים שנה (כפי שילמד הבן חמש למקרא תיכף), הרי בסיפור בפרשתנו היה משה בן ע"ט שנה לערך. ומובן, שעד אז בודאי אירעו אצלו כמה ענינים (וכיון שמדובר אודות משה רבינו - היו בודאי ענינים) חשובים. ואם כן, שואל הבן חמש למקרא, היתכן שבפסוק מסופר קצת מאד אודות אותה תקופה!?

ועל זה מסביר לו המלמד: ה"חומש" - אינו ספר של סיפור דברי הימים, דברי ימי צדיקים, אלא "תורה ציווה לנו משה מורשה קהלת יעקב", כך, שכל ענין שהתורה מספרת אודותיו הוא כדי ללמוד ממנו הוראה, ולכן לא נזכרו בתורה כל הענינים שאירעו בינתיים, כיון שאינם נוגעים ללימוד הוראה כו'.

6. וארא ז, ז: "ומשה בן שמונים שנה ואחריו בן שלש ושמנים שנה בדרך אל פרעה".
7. ברכה לג, ד.

The Torah does not recount stories merely for narrative purposes. Every story included has a moral or lesson relevant to our lives.

Rashi establishes this principle at the very beginning of the Torah. Rashi asks, why does the Torah begin with the story of Creation? Should it not have started with the words “This month shall be for you”—the first mitzvah given to the Jewish people, the sanctification of the new month?

Rashi explains that the purpose of recounting the Creation and everything up to the mitzvot is to justify to the nations of the world why the Land of Israel belongs to the Jewish people. Since G-d created the world, He has the authority to give it to whomever He wills.

However, from Rashi's question itself, we learn an important insight: there is no place in the Torah for mere storytelling. Every word and every narrative has significance, conveying halachic or moral lessons.

This is precisely why the Torah does not recount Moses' experiences in Cush during those years, from the age of twenty to seventy. These events, while historically interesting, do not offer a halachic or moral teaching relevant to our lives, and therefore, they were not included in the Torah.

Student's
pg. 5

This will lead the student to ask, what is the lesson we can learn from the episode in which G-d wanted to kill Moses?

The question is particularly strong considering that in the weekly portion of Noah the Torah adds eight extra letters, using the roundabout expression “from the animals that are not pure” rather than stating an unpleasant word. The Torah certainly shouldn't relate negative things about Moses for no reason. There must be a lesson that we are supposed to learn from this episode.

וכיון שכן, שואל הבן חמש למקרא,
מהי ההוראה שיכולים ללמוד מזה
ש"ויבקש המיתו?!"

ובפרט על פי מה שמצינו ש"עקם
הכתוב שמונה אותיות ולא הוציא
דבר מגונה מפיו, שנאמר (בפרשת
נח⁸) מן הבהמה הטהורה ומן הבהמה
אשר איננה טהורה⁹, ועל אחת כמה
וכמה בנוגע למשה רבינו שבודאי
אין לספר עליו ענין בלתי-רצוי,
ובהכרח לומר שיש הוראה שלמדים
מענין זה.

8. ד, ת.
9. פסחים ג, א. וראה ב"ב קכג, א.

B. The Mission Can be Accomplished by Another

>> The Rebbe

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The key to understanding this is alluded to in the continuation of Rashi's comment, "it was taught in a Baraita: Rabbi Yose said." Rashi doesn't usually mention the author of a particular teaching, unless the name adds relevant explanation to the statement.

ובכן, הבהרת ענין זה מרומזת בהמשך דברי רש"י "תניא אמר רבי יוסי וכו'", שמזכיר את שמו של בעל המאמר, אף שאין דרכו של רש"י להזכיר את שמו של בעל המאמר, מלבד כאשר הדבר נוגע לעצם פירושו.

There is a well-known principle regarding Rashi's style: as a rule, he does not mention the names of the Tannaim or Amoraim whose interpretations he cites. If he were to do so regularly, nearly every other comment would begin by naming a particular sage. So, when does Rashi specifically mention the name of the source? Only when, in some way, it contributes to our understanding of the explanation.

In this case, Rashi mentions that it was Rabbi Yose who explained Moses' issue with fulfilling the mitzvah of circumcision and described the punishment and what the serpent did to Moses.

Why does Rashi emphasize that this interpretation comes from Rabbi Yose? What does it add to our understanding?

If we go back one chapter, to the episode where G-d repeatedly urged Moses to go to Egypt and redeem the Jewish people, we also find Rashi quoting Rabbi Yose in another commentary. This connection invites us to consider the broader context and relationship between these two interpretations by Rabbi Yose.

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Rabbi Yose's name is mentioned in an earlier comment of Rashi, on the verse "G-d's anger was kindled against Moses."

שמו של רבי יוסי נזכר בפירוש רש"י לפני זה על הפסוק¹⁰ "ויחר אף ה' במשה":

Who is the Levite?

This episode takes place during the period when Moses is living in Midian, married to Zipporah, and working as a shepherd. One day he takes his flock to pasture and sees a bush aflame, but the

flames are not consuming the bush. Moses approaches the bush and G-d reveals Himself to him giving him his life's mission.

Source 2 Exodus 3:6-11

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G-d said, "I am the G-d of your father, the G-d of Abraham, the G-d of Isaac, and the G-d of Jacob." Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look toward G-d. G-d said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and I have heard their cry because of their slave drivers, for I know their pains. I have descended to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivvites, and the Jebusites. Now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now come, and I will send you to Pharaoh to take My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." Moses said to G-d, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should take the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

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וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי אֲבִיךָ
אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק
וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב וַיִּסְתֵּר מִשְׁפַּח פָּנָיו
כִּי יָרָא מִהִפְּטִי אֶל הָאֱלֹקִים.
וַיֹּאמֶר ה' רְאֵה רָאִיתִי אֶת
עֲנֵי עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר בְּמִצְרַיִם
וְאֶת צַעֲקָתָם שְׁמַעְתִּי מִפָּנָיו
נִגַּשְׁתִּי כִּי יִדְעֹתִי אֶת מַכָּאֲבָיו.
וָאֵרַד לְהַצִּילוֹ מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם
וּלְהַעֲלֹתוֹ מִן הָאֶרֶץ הַהִוא אֶל
אֶרֶץ טוֹבָה וְרַחֲבָה אֶל אֶרֶץ
זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ אֶל מְקוֹם
הַכְּנָעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהָאֱמֹרִי
וְהַפְּרִזִּי וְהַחִוִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי. וַעֲתָה
הִנֵּה צַעֲקַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּאָה
אֵלַי וְגַם רָאִיתִי אֶת הַלֶּחֶץ
אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם לֹחֲצִים אֹתָם.
וַעֲתָה לֵךְ וְאֶשְׁלַחְךָ אֶל
פַּרְעֹה וְהוֹצֵא אֶת עַמִּי בְנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם.

After the revelation and the mission G-d assigns to Moses, an entire saga of negotiation unfolds between Moses and G-d. Moses resists the mission with various excuses, and G-d responds to each of his objections.

First, Moses says, "Who am I to speak to Pharaoh?" G-d reassures him, "I will give you a sign that will show I have sent you."

Then Moses questions, "What if the Israelites ask me the name of the G-d who has suddenly come to save them? What should I tell them?" G-d responds, "Tell them, 'I will be what I will be' has sent me to you."

Moses persists: "They won't believe me!" G-d assures him, "I will give you a second sign to show them, and through it, they will believe you."

Moses then raises another objection: "I am heavy of speech and tongue—I stutter. How can I speak to them?" G-d replies, "Who gives man speech or makes him mute? Is it not I, G-d? I will be with you and guide your words!"

Finally, after G-d addresses all his concerns, Moses simply says, "Send someone else, please."

At this point, G-d's patience runs out...

Student's G-d's anger was kindled against Moses, and
pg. 7 He said, "Is there not Aaron, your brother, the
Levite? I know he will surely speak, and behold,
he is coming to meet you. When he sees you,
he will rejoice in his heart. You shall speak to
him and put the words into his mouth, and I
will be with your mouth and with his mouth,
and I will instruct you both on what to do. He
will speak for you to the people, and he will
be your spokesman, while you will act as his
leader. Take this staff in your hand, for with it,
you will perform the signs."

וַיַּחַר אַף ה' בַּמֶּשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלֹא
אֶהְרֹן אֲחִיךָ הַלֵּוִי יִדְעָתִי כִּי דֹבֵר
יִדְבָּר הוּא וְגַם הִנֵּה הוּא יֵצֵא
לִקְרֹאתְךָ וְרָאֶךָ וְשָׁמַח בְּלִבּוֹ.
וְדַבַּרְתָּ אֵלָיו וְשַׁמַּתָּ אֶת הַדְּבָרִים
בְּפִיו וְאֲנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה עִם פִּיךָ וְעִם
פִּיהוּ וְהוֹרִיתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶת אֲשֶׁר
תַּעֲשׂוּן. וְדֹבֵר הוּא לָךְ אֶל הָעָם
וְהָיָה הוּא יְהִיָּה לָךְ לִפְהִי וְאֵתָה
תְּהִיָּה לוֹ לְאֻלָּקִים. וְאֵת הַמַּטֵּה
הַזֶּה תִּקַּח בְּיָדְךָ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה בּוֹ
אֶת הָאֵתוֹת.

Rashi

Student's Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha teaches
pg. 7 that whenever the Torah mentions G-d's
anger being kindled, it is usually followed
by a consequence or punishment.
However, in this instance with Moses, no
explicit consequence is mentioned, and
no punishment appears to follow.

וַיַּחַר אַף. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻעַ
בֶּן קֹרְחָה אוֹמֵר כָּל
חֲרוֹן אַף שְׂבִתוּרָה
עוֹשֶׂה רָשָׁם וְזֶה לֹא
נֶאֱמַר בּוֹ רָשָׁם וְלֹא
מְצִינּוֹ שְׂבָא עֹנֵשׁ עַל
יְדֵי אוֹתוֹ חֲרוֹן.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha points out something unusual. Every time the Torah mentions that "the anger of G-d was kindled," it is always followed by a punishment. For example: "And the people were like complainers in the ears of G-d; and when G-d heard, His anger was kindled, and the fire of G-d burned among them, consuming the outskirts of the camp" (Numbers 11:1).

However, here, when it says "G-d's anger was kindled against Moses," no punishment follows.

But Rabbi Yose proves the opposite:

Student's Rabbi Yose responds, "Here too, a
pg. 7 consequence is implied. When G-d says,
'Is there not Aaron your brother, the
Levite?' it signifies a change in destiny.
Aaron, who was originally designated
to remain a Levite, will now become a
priest (kohen), while Moses will remain a
Levite. G-d had intended the priesthood
to come from Moses, but this is no longer
the case. Instead, Aaron will be the priest,
as it is written: 'But as for Moses, the
man of G-d, his sons were to be called in
the tribe of Levi' (I Chronicles 23:14)."

אָמַר לוֹ רַבִּי יוֹסִי אַף
בְּזוֹ נֶאֱמַר בּוֹ רָשָׁם –
הֲלֹא אֶהְרֹן אֲחִיךָ הַלֵּוִי
– שְׁהָיָה עֲתִיד לִהְיוֹת
לוֹי וְלֹא כֹהֵן, וְהִכְהִנָּה
הִיִּיתִי אוֹמֵר לְצִאֵת
מִמֶּךָ, מִעֲתָה לֹא יִהְיֶה
כֵּן אֲלֹא הוּא יִהְיֶה כֹהֵן
וְאֵתָה הַלֵּוִי, שְׁנֵאֲמַר
"וּמִשָּׁה אִישׁ הָאֻלָּקִים
בָּנָיו יִקְרָאוּ עַל שִׁבְט
הַלֵּוִי".

The original plan was for Moses to serve as both the leader and the High Priest. However, because Moses hesitated and resisted accepting the mission, G-d's anger was kindled, and as a result, the plan was changed. G-d decided that Aaron would become the High Priest instead.

>> The Rebbe

The Mission Can Be Transferred

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We see here Rabbi Yose's approach: even though the priesthood was intended to be given to Moses, this could change because of a particular incident, making Aaron the priest instead of Moses.

ומכאן רואים את שיטת רבי יוסי - שאף שהכהונה היתה צריכה להינתן למשה, יכול להיות ענין מסוים שבגללו נשתנה הדבר, שאהרן יהיה כהן, ולא משה.

From here, we learn that Rabbi Yose's approach is that G-d can change the mission assigned to someone due to their actions.

Therefore, in our case as well, Rabbi Yose is explaining that even though G-d initially assigned Moses the mission to redeem the Jews, He could change His mind and send someone else instead.

That is why Rashi mentions the name of the sage—Rabbi Yose—to help us connect this interpretation to his view in the previous case as well. This allows us to better understand his general perspective on the matter.

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The same can be said in our case. Even though the mission was originally given to Moses, events could have caused it to be taken away from him and given to Aaron. G-d's mission to Pahraoh would be carried out at any rate, but by Aaron, rather than by Moses.

ומזה מובן גם בנדון דידן, שאף שבתחילה ניתנה שליחות זו למשה, יכול להיות שבגלל ענין מסוים תלקח שליחות זו ממשה ותינתן לאהרן, כך, שבכל מקרה היתה מתקיימת שליחותו של הקב"ה לפרעה, אלא שהיתה נעשית (לא על ידי משה, אלא) על ידי אהרן.

Therefore, we should not wonder what would have happened if, G-d forbid, Moses had faced consequences. The redemption would still have occurred, as G-d would have chosen another leader to fulfill the mission.

C. Don't Trust Yourself

>> The Rebbe

Urgency Is Important

Student's There is a lesson for us to learn here.
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A person can claim to be extremely righteous, even as righteous as Moses.

While regarding prophecy the Torah states "no prophet like Moses ever arose," in righteousness it is possible for a person to reach Moses's level.

When they have a task to do, such a person can argue that they need not do it swiftly. They will perform the task eventually, and what difference will it make if they don't carry it out as swiftly as possible?

About this we are told "don't believe in yourself." Matters can start with something minor like a lack of urgency, but it can lead to termination of life, as in our case, where Moses was judged punishable by death for not circumcising Eliezer swiftly.

If Moses, due to his lack of urgency, almost lost his life and the great mission assigned to him, so too, even if you are a great person, you could lose everything over something small. Don't take anything for granted, and never give up on a single mitzvah.

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A well-known story that reflects this is that of Queen Esther. When Haman's decree to annihilate the Jewish people was issued, Mordechai approached Esther and urged her to go to King

ומכאן למדים מוסר השכל:

יכול משהו לבוא ולטעון, שהוא עומד במדריגה גבוהה של צדיק, עד לדרגת הצדקות של משה רבינו

- שהרי רק בנוגע לנבואה נאמר¹¹ "ולא קם נביא... כמשה", אבל בנוגע לצדקות, יכולים להגיע למדריגת משה רבינו -

ולכן, כשצריך לעשות איזה ענין, אינו צריך לעשותו בזריזות גדולה דוקא; הוא יעשה זאת בין כך, ומה כבר יחסר אם לא יעשה הדבר בזריזות גדולה.

ועל זה אומרים לו: "אל תאמין בעצמך"¹²; ההתחלה יכולה להיות מדבר קטן - העדר הזריזות בלבד, אבל כתוצאה מזה יכול לבוא אחר כך ענין שהוא היפך החיים, כבנדון דידן, שלפי שלא הזדרז למול את אליעזר, נענש בעונש מיתה.

11. ברכה לר, יו"ד.
12. אבות פ"ב מ"ד.

Achashverosh, reveal her Jewish identity, and ask him to save her people.

Esther responded to Mordechai, explaining that this was not so simple. She had not been summoned by the king for thirty days, and if she approached him without an invitation, she could be putting her life at risk.

Then, Mordechai told her: "If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish." The Rebbe explains the meaning of "you will perish": It means you will lose the mitzvah. G-d will certainly save His people. If you act, you will merit the mitzvah and eternal honor for saving the Jewish people. If you hesitate, someone else will fulfill the mitzvah, and you will lose out.

This is true for every mitzvah. For example, the rabbi calls you and says: "Someone needs to say Kaddish for his mother, and we need a tenth for the minyan. Can you help?" If you hurry and agree to come, you are the tenth, you receive the mitzvah, and bring great joy to that fellow congregant and the entire minyan. But if you delay, explaining that you are busy and may come later, in the end, a minyan will be formed without you, and you will miss the opportunity to be part of it.

Or, for example, a growing community needs to build a synagogue, and they need donors and volunteers to help complete the big project. The rabbi or the community committee approaches people in the community for help, some through donations and others through physical assistance. Those who rush to help become part of this important work, while those who hesitate miss out on the mitzvah and are left outside.

A Woman Saves the Day

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There is another lesson for us to learn on the flip side. Even a person who has failed in a certain matter should not think that all is lost for them. Even such a person can be saved, as we see with Moses who failed in a particular area and reached the state of "the angel turned into a sort of serpent and swallowed Moses from his head to his thighs, and then spit him out and swallowed him from his feet to his private parts." Nevertheless, Zipporah was able to save him.

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We also see here the great power of Jewish women and girls to save the Jewish people. This is highlighted at the beginning of the Torah portion

אך יש גם הוראה לאידך גיסא:
אפילו מי שנכשל בדבר, אין לו
לחשוב שכבר אבוד, אלא גם אותו
יכולים להציל - כפי שאירע אצל
משה, שאף שנכשל בדבר, ועד
ש"היה המלאך נעשה כמין נחש
ובולעו מראשו ועד ירכיו וחוזר
ובולעו מרגליו ועד אותו מקום"¹³,
אף על פי כן, באה צפורה והצילה
אותו כו'.

וכאן רואים את גודל מעלתן
של נשי ובנות ישראל בהצלת
בני ישראל - כפי שמודגש

13. פרש"י עה"פ.

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with the story of Shifra and Puah, the Jewish midwives in Egypt, and also with Zipporah's actions.

הן בהתחלת הפרשה בנוגע ל"מילדות העבריות" שפרה ופועה¹⁴, והן בנוגע לצפורה.

Once again, we see the tremendous influence that a woman has on her husband, her family, and even on the entire nation. The fact that Moses was saved and was able to continue with his mission to redeem the Jewish people is attributed to the wisdom and resourcefulness of his wife, Zipporah .

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The lesson we learn from this incident is twofold: we learn how important even a minor matter such as lack of urgency is, and also that even a person who has failed can always restore.

וזוהי כללות ההוראה שלמדים מהפרשה הנ"ל - הן עד כמה נוגע וחשוב אפילו דבר קטן (כמו העדר הזריזות), והן שגם אם נכשל בדבר יכולים תמיד לתקן¹⁵.

משיחת שבת פרשת שמות, כ"ה טבת,
מברכים החודש שבט, ה'תשל"ג.
הנחה בלתי מוגה.
תורת מנחם כרך ע"א עמוד 37

Story – A Woman Builds, A Woman Destroys

It all began when Korach returned home for lunch with his wife. They sat around the table, and his wife asked him, "So, what new thing did Moses teach you today in class?"

"Regarding the mitzvah of tzitzit," Korach answered. "We are required to attach a blue thread to the corners of our garments."

"Again, he starts inventing new commandments out of his own imagination?" she asked provocatively. "Why don't you go to him with a totally blue garment and ask if it requires tzitzit?"

Korach responded defensively, "How can you speak like that? Moses is our teacher, the master of the prophets."

"Yes, I know," she replied, "But he took the kingship for himself, gave the priesthood to Aaron and his sons, and left you to be Levites. He even shaved your heads! Does it seem normal to you that you have no hair?"

"But he shaved his own head too!" Korach tried to defend Moses.

"Of course, why not? He's willing to do anything, as long as he gets the kingship for himself."

Her words of incitement sank into Korach's heart. He went out to the camp of Israel and began speaking ill of Moses. People started agreeing with him, and a rebellion against Moses was born. Slowly, the circle of discontent grew, and the propaganda spread throughout the camp. Even two hundred and fifty renowned leaders joined him.

One of the central activists in Korach's campaign was On ben Pelet. From the beginning, he joined Korach and helped lead the opposition. However, his wife didn't approve of Korach's cause. She reasoned with her husband, "What will you gain from this? If Moses wins, you'll still be his disciple, and if Korach wins, you'll still be his disciple. So, what have you gained? It's better to just sit back and not get involved."

"But I'm a key figure in this struggle!" On protested. "How can I just step back?"

"Save yourself and don't get involved in a dispute that's not yours," she advised him.

When Korach's supporters came to take On ben Pelet to the famous confrontation between Korach and Moses, where Korach and his followers were swallowed by the earth, On's wife gave him wine to drink and sat by the entrance of their tent, with her hair unbound. When Korach's men saw her, they recoiled at seeing a married woman acting immodestly. This intervention helped On ben Pelet avoid being drawn into the conflict, and he was saved due to the quick thinking of his wife.

Key Points:

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- On his way to Egypt, Moses stops at an inn and encounters an angel of G-d who seeks to kill him. The reason: his failure to circumcise his son Eliezer.

- The Rebbe asks: How could Moses face the death penalty, considering that his death would terminate G-d's mission to redeem Israel?

- The Rebbe explains: Rabbi Yose says that because of Moses' initial refusal to redeem Israel, he was punished by not being appointed High Priest. Based on this principle, it can be said that if Moses had been punished with death, the mission to redeem Israel would have passed to Aaron and been properly carried out, just as the priesthood was transferred to Aaron.

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- The lesson for us from this negative story about Moses is twofold: Spiritual urgency is critical. Delay or hesitation can have severe consequences.

Student's *• On the other hand, one who has faltered is not lost. They can still be saved,*
pg. 11 *as was the case with Moses.*

Takeaway:

Student's *Urgency is not just a recommendation for a better life; it is an important and meaningful trait. When*
pg. 11 *an opportunity for mitzvah arises, we should commit to doing it immediately without delay. Whether*
it's making a phone call to parents, attending a Torah class, or helping a neighbor in need, we should
act now, and not wait for later.

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