

# From the desk of Rabbi Baumann



Erev Shabbos Parshas Shemos 5782

## TRUE LEADERSHIP

Dear Parents,

With the beginning of *Sefer Shemos*, we are introduced to the greatest leader the world has ever seen. Was there a particular quality that *Moshe Rabbeinu* possessed that made him so worthy for and so successful in his mission of leading *Klal Yisroel*?

We read that *Hashem* revealed Himself to *Moshe* at the burning bush. The *pasuk* tells us רְאֵה נִיְשָׁרֵעַ כִּי סֶל לְדֹאֹת "Hashem saw that Moshe turned aside to see" (*Shemos* 3:4). Many question; what is the significance of *Moshe's* turning to see the burning bush. Wouldn't anyone be curious about such an unusual sight? *The Medrash Rabba* (1:27) explains that Hashem was noting that Moshe had a special quality to turn and look as he did when he turned and saw the suffering of his brothers – ייְרָא בְּכָלָתָם (*Shemos* 2:11) – what made an 'impression' on *Hashem* was *Moshe's* looking into the suffering of his fellow Jews in Egypt, many years earlier.



**Hashem saw that Moshe turned aside to see**

This brings another question. What was so noteworthy about *Moshe* looking at their burdens? Many would be interested to see what is going on around them. A number of *Mefarshim* (*Seforno*, *Peirush Maharzu*) explain that *Moshe* looked deeper and saw something deeper. He understood and felt the depth of their pain and suffering. And why was that so special?

Let's remember who *Moshe* was. He was a favored prince living in the lap of luxury and already a powerful persona in *Pharaoh's* court. His life was on a trajectory of royal privilege and pleasure. What person in his position would give more than a passing thought to some lowly slaves struggling under their burdens? Even a compassionate person would likely give a sigh and move on. What does he need to get involved for? Just mind your own business and you'll be much happier.

**When he looked at people and events around him, he consciously focused on their situation...**

That was not *Moshe* and that is why he was so fit to be a leader. He had the quality of genuinely caring about others. The fact that he was a king and they were lowly slaves made no difference to *Moshe*. He would not let his elevated status get in the way of having compassion for his fellow Jew. When he looked at people and events around him, he consciously focused on their situation and saw and felt the suffering that went into creating the scene in front of him.

Having compassion and empathy for others does not come easily to people in our generation. There is a lot of competition and great focus on self. However, don't we want our children to develop an elevated sense of compassion? How do our children react when they see a friend fall and are in pain? If a classmate's drink spills, do they laugh, or do they rush in to help and reassure their friend? If a teammate drops the ball and loses a point for their team, does our child blurt out a nasty remark, or do they say – "nice try, you'll catch it next time?"

True leadership means taking responsibility for others' wellbeing. It starts at a young age. In our (almost) post-Covid time, there appears to be more tension and frustration, perhaps leading to nastiness, rudeness and selfishness. Hurtful comments are being reported at a rate greater than I can remember. Teasing and even bullying is occurring in some cases. We all need to work together to redirect this behavior. We are privileged to have many new students in the Yeshiva. Welcoming them and making them feel part of our school and class community is a great opportunity for our young 'leaders'.

**True leadership means taking responsibility for others' wellbeing.**

As parents, we need to role model and teach our children to follow in *Moshe Rabbeinu's* ways. Having more money, being smarter, stronger, quicker, taller or more socially adept than others should not be reasons to become haughty, exclusive or nasty. They are gifts from *Hashem* that should elevate us to be true leaders – leaders in care and compassion for those with lesser or different gifts than we have.

We measure success in school and in life in many different ways. Let us place concern, compassion and support of others at the pinnacle of our children's goals and enable them to follow in the footsteps of *Moshe Rabbeinu* in *Torah*, *Yiras Shomayim* and deep concern for each other.

Best wishes for a caring and supportive *Shabbos*,

Rabbi Baumann