

בשבת

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Living Life Deeper

ALL THAT YOU CAN BE

Parshas Shemos chronicles the story of *Klal Yisrael's* descent into slavery. As well, we are introduced to the great *Moshe Rabbeinu*, the mortal man destined to lead the Jewish nation out of Egypt.

In an amazing turn of events, Moshe is raised by his future arch-nemesis, Pharaoh himself. One day, the *passuk* states, Moshe headed out of the palace to see the suffering of his brethren.¹ This event is described in the Torah as, "וַיֵּרָא בְּסֻכֹּתָם," "and he saw their suffering." Rashi² states that Moshe specifically focused his attention on their suffering, in order to feel their pain.

Reb Hensch Leibowitz³ (1918–2008) points out that it appears that Moshe had to do something special, to focus his attention on the hardship around him, in order to properly feel the plight of *Klal Yisrael*. How does this make sense; the future leader of the Jewish nation doesn't feel the anguish of his own cousins?

To answer this, Reb Hensch explains that without a doubt Moshe felt the pain of those in Egypt. Who wouldn't? However, in order to feel this to the depth of his soul, Moshe had to concentrate and focus on his surroundings. Without this, he certainly would have been pained by their ordeal, but not to the extent that he was capable of feeling.

While there is a clear lesson here on the importance of feeling another's pain, there is something much deeper and more subtle. How great is the human being! See how much depth, capacity, and subtlety Hashem has given us. One would think that *Moshe Rabbeinu* would simply be 'saturated' with feeling, leaving no room for more, by simply standing in the nightmare that was Egypt. Yet we find that he had room for more, more feeling, more depth, and more insight.

The accomplishments of great people should give us pause — all of that humility, patience, or caring, and it fits into a human being!

We tend to think that we are who we are. This is simply not true. Who we are now does not define us, as every single one of us has been given immeasurable abilities to feel, to care, and to grow.

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

It's nice to hear how special, unique, or powerful the human being is, but I certainly don't *feel* that way! How can we inspire ourselves with the knowledge of the majesty of man?

We tend to self-define ourselves by our history. Why would we think we are capable of something greater, if we've never seen ourselves act that way?

Two ideas may be helpful. The first is to focus on the truth. Is it really true that we never rose to the occasion, or did something that we didn't think we were capable of? It may have been a one-time occurrence, but it doesn't have to be! If we've done it once, we can do it again. It may take time and patience to change our habits, or focus our minds, but it can be done.

Another idea is to observe the behaviors of others. When we see someone with extraordinary patience, or one who has a grateful personality, we can think, "Why not me?"

Yes, some people are born with skills and talents that others don't have. But we aren't so different that we cannot attain similar abilities.

Hashem has opened the door to many good *middos*, we just need to walk through.

1 Shemos 2:11

2 *ibid.* s.v. וירא בסבלתם

3 Chidushei HaLev, *ibid.*

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**Those who don't consistently study
Mussar are clueless as to what Yiras
Shomayim truly consists of; just as a
patient who is numbed doesn't feel the
scalpel, so too they believe all of their
ways to be virtuous and correct.**

- Rav Eliezer Papo, *Sefer Peleh Yo'etz*,
chapter "Mussar"

THE BIGGEST CLIENT

Yet another day, and again Mr. Yaakov Feig* lost his patience with his wife, his kids, and late at night, with himself. He wasn't sure if it was the stress of his job, the demands of his home, or his inability to control his temper, but whatever it was, it was destroying his *shalom bayis*. Everybody in the house always seemed angry, and that just fed the flames. But what was there to do?

Yaakov picked up the phone, and called an old *rebbe* of his, Rabbi Goldbaum. Yaakov explained the situation, how he came home tired and worn out every day, and how it didn't take long until everyone was at each other's throats, arguing, yelling, and generally bitter. "Each child demands what they want, nobody shares, and are always fighting. My wife is exhausted and, and I've already had my fill for the day from difficult clients and demanding schedules. I just want to come home to peace and quiet, but I find myself breaking up fights, or worse, causing them. And I just don't know what to do anymore!"

"What does your wife do during the day?"

"My wife is a teacher."

"And who is with your children when they come home from school?"

"My wife. After she finishes work, she heads home. They come in about fifteen minutes later or so."

"I see. So your wife doesn't get much of a break either, correct? And I'm guessing that she generally prepares dinner as well? No wonder everyone is so stressed!"

"So what should I do? Go on a vacation?"

Rabbi Goldbaum laughed. "That's an idea, but an expensive one! And I don't think that's a long-term solution. No, I think you'd be better off by using your latent patience muscles. The truth is, Yaakov, most of us have reserves that we don't tap into, or might not even be aware of. But they are there, and just a few simple tricks will help you realize there is more to you than you know.

"If you were exhausted, and it was the end of the day, but a big client called with an important order, would you snap at them? Of course not! Because you've mentally assigned importance to this client, and his needs. Well, let me tell you, your family is your biggest client. By far. They need you, because you are the only one who can 'fill' the order — teaching them through example about how to be a father. Yaakov, when you come home, reframe, and think about the opportunity in front of you. *The more difficult the situation, the greater the lesson you'll be teaching.*"

Yaakov took his *rebbe's* words to heart. He gave it his all, focused on the fact that his wife, too, was exhausted, and that his family needed him. And miracles began to happen. When he allowed things to slide, his kids did too. They shared, they smiled, and laughter returned to the Feig house once again.

**Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- Even the most evil human being has the ability to totally turn around their life — in a single moment!¹
- The lowliest person is still a special and unique human being. Therefore, it is an honor for even a great person to serve them.²

1 Rashi on *Bamidbar* 16:7, s.v. לכם

2 Rashi on *Bereishis* 18:5, s.v. על