



## *Parshas Shemos 2023, true leadership qualities*

Our Parsha ends the origins of a family and begins the birth of a nation. The Torah starts by giving us context to the Jewish people's situation at that time. Yosef and all his brothers had passed on, and the new Pharaoh forgot Yosef and all his accomplishments.

As the Jewish people began to flourish and prosper, Pharaoh became fearful of their growing numbers and resolved to find a solution to his “*Jewish problem.*” He enslaved the Jewish people and forced them to do hard work to break their minds, bodies, and spirits.

Meanwhile, Moshe Rabbeinu ventured out of the royal residences where he was raised and saw the enslaved Jewish nation. As Moshe roamed about, he witnessed an incident that would forever change his destiny.

Moshe saw an Egyptian slavemaster hitting and beating a Jew slave. He decided he could not stand by anymore as his brothers and sisters were suffering. Moshe said G-d's holy and secret 72-letter name, instantly killing the evil Egyptian.

The backlash came quickly; Pharaoh discovered what he did and wished to kill Moshe for his actions. But Moshe had already fled Egypt and escaped to the country of Midian to avoid Pharaoh's punishment. When he arrived, he went to the city well and met the seven daughters of Yisro, the priest of Midian.

After Moshe helped them draw water for their animals, the sisters returned home and told their father what had happened. Yisro then invited Moshe to eat and stay at his home. Moshe eventually married Yisro's daughter, Tizpporah, and became the shepherd for all Yisro's animals.

Once while herding the animals, Moshe came across a burning bush, but the more he looked, the stranger it seemed. The bush appeared to be ablaze, yet the roses and leaves were not burning.

As Moshe came closer to investigate, G-d called out to him; He said, do not come closer and take off your shoes, for you are standing on holy ground. G-d told Moshe that He heard the cries of the Jewish people and wanted Moshe to lead them out of Egypt.

Moshe objected and argued that he had a lisp and could not adequately represent G-d's holy words. G-d responded that Aaron, his brother, would assist him with his mission, but Moshe's purpose was to be a leader. Although Moshe tried not to accept this vital mission, he gathered his wife and children and headed to Egypt.

However, a question comes to mind: G-d approached and revealed Himself to Moshe through the burning bush. But why did G-d not call out to Moshe directly rather than through the burning bush? What is the significance of the burning bush and its lesson for Moshe Rabbeinu?!

The Ibn Ezra, Rav Avraham Meir Ibn Ezra, a commentary focusing on each word's simple meaning, gives an interesting explanation. He writes that G-d revealed Himself through a burning bush to teach Moshe a powerful lesson. Just as the bush may be on fire yet not be consumed, so can G-d liberate the Jewish people from the harshest circumstances.

The Ibn Ezra explains that G-d demonstrated His power to Moshe so he would accept the mission and lead the Jewish nation out of Egypt. G-d knew Moshe would be hesitant to take on this assignment as he experienced Pharaoh's anger. Hence, G-d used the burning bush to remind Moshe of His dominance and rulership over the universe.

However, the Sforno, Rav Ovadiah Sforno, *an Italian Torah commentator*, gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that G-d used the burning bush to teach Moshe an essential lesson in leadership.

Just like the bush was aflame but not consumed, so too Moshe must inspire his people with a zeal that doesn't overwhelm them.

Moshe never personally experienced slavery when he was in Egypt. His tribe, the tribe of Levi, was not enslaved, which Pharaoh reminds Moshe of when he comes to liberate the nation. He was saved by Batya, Pharaoh's daughter, and was raised in the royal palace. He evaded Pharaoh's punishment by fleeing to Midian, where he met his wife and had two sons.

The Sforno explains that the burning bush demonstrated to Moshe how to approach and deal with a nation in pain. His energy, passion, and enthusiasm to carry out G-d's plan must not minimize or belittle the immense suffering the nation is experiencing. He should be delicate and sensitive when approaching the Jewish people to tell them they will finally be redeemed.

The Sforno continues that just as the bush has beautiful roses along with spiky thorns, so will the Jewish nation. There will be righteous, upright, and virtuous individuals, along with those who are wicked and seek to do evil. Just as the fire encompassed the entire bush, so will the leader who will liberate the whole nation, righteous and all.

The two powerful leadership lessons the Sforno learns from the burning bush are even more relevant as the nation's divide grows deeper. We must search and follow those looking to bridge the gap and close the divide tearing us apart. As we approach a period of financial and societal uncertainty, we must realize that a fragmented or torn nation won't stand the test of time.

In our daily life, it is imperative that we recognize the uniqueness and holiness of every person's soul and their duty in G-d's world. Whether they are close friends, family, or just strangers, they are an integral and necessary part of G-d's plan for the universe. They alone could tip the scale in our favor and bring about the ultimate redemption.

**"A good leader leads the people from above them.  
A great leader leads the people from within them."**

*Have a meaningful Shabbos, Rabbi Sholom Yemini*