

In פרשת שמות, Hashem instructed משה to gather the זקנים and go with אהרן to פרעה and say, "Let my people go." So משה and אהרן gathered all the זקנים, and together they set off toward the palace. But as they got closer, something happened - משה and אהרן turned around, and all the זקנים had fled, having been overcome by fear, leaving משה and אהרן to face פרעה alone.

Later, in פרשת משפטים, when it came time for משה to ascend הר סיני to receive the תורה, Hashem responded with מדה כנגד מדה. He told the זקנים, "I asked you to visit a מלך בשר ודם, and you were too afraid. Now you're coming to stand before the מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא? You can't go all the way up the mountain, you can only ascend halfway."

But there's an important detail here. The פסוק says that משה alone ascended - מֹשֶׁה לְבַדּוֹ (24:2). What about אהרן? After all, אהרן had stood by משה's side the entire time. He hadn't abandoned him like the זקנים. Shouldn't אהרן have been allowed to go up too?

The truth is, אהרן was allowed to ascend. So why didn't he? Who decided he shouldn't go up? אהרן himself.

Why did he make that choice? Because אהרן felt bad for the זקנים. He couldn't bear the thought of going up while they were left behind, feeling excluded and ashamed. So he chose not to ascend, even though he was fully permitted to do so.

What an incredible act of גדלות. What remarkable חסד. This is אהרן הכהן, the אוהב שלום ורודף שלום. He felt the pain of others so deeply that he made their feelings his own. He didn't want them to feel diminished or left out, so he willingly gave up an immense זכות.

This is what true leadership looks like. A leader isn't just someone who commands respect or holds a title. A real leader feels the emotions of the people, internalizes their struggles, and takes action to alleviate their pain. A leader doesn't just talk about compassion - he lives it. That was the גדלות of אהרן הכהן. Good Shabbos!

