

The Torah repeats several times the story of Gd charging Moses with the mission to present a message of hope to the suffering Jewish People, to inform them redemption is imminent and to tell Pharaoh to release the people. In their initial meeting at the burning bush on Mount Sinai, Moses pushes back on this responsibility several times. He notes that he is not the right candidate to be the redeemer as he is physically handicapped, he stutters, and he lacks the established leadership role and connection to the people that his brother Aaron has. He argues it would be better for all concerned if Aaron was given this mission. When he finally acquiesces to go on the mission he is dejected when he meets with initial defeat. Perhaps Moses thought that all he needed to do was to simply appear before Pharaoh, tell him that Gd sent him to free the people and Pharaoh would be magically moved by his words and, out of fear of Gd, immediately release the people. Instead, his initial attempt meets with disaster as the people's work conditions deteriorate further and a desperate situation becomes much worse. Again there is a dialogue with Gd and Moses again says that he was the wrong person for this role, as perhaps the failure is because of his limited speech. Again he suggests someone else should have been sent who might have had a better chance of success. Again the Torah repeats that Moses and Aaron were charged with redeeming the people from Egypt followed by listing their lineage, starting with Reuben.

Why is the core story of Moses's mission repeated? How was Moses's concern regarding his inadequacy for the role addressed in the reiteration of the mission to free the Jewish People? Why was it necessary to insert the detailed lineage of Moses and Aaron at this point? What is the connection between these sections?

Gd appeared to Moses at the burning bush and told him to act as His emissary, שליח, to Pharaoh and the Jewish People. Moses initially refused the assignment, not because he was lazy, but rather because he realized that he was not the best choice. The emissary must be an appropriate representative of the principal party. Moses argued that he was not an acceptable agent because he was handicapped and could not adequately represent Gd before Pharaoh and the Jewish People. Gd replied to Moses that if His intention was to find a great warrior or political leader or spokesman for the Jewish People, perhaps Moses would not have been selected. However, the main purpose for the exodus is for the Jewish People to receive and accept the Torah and commandments on this very mountain. This will be your sign, after the exodus you shall worship Gd on this mountain. In order to do that, they must transform themselves in a short time from a group of slaves into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. For that, the people need a teacher, and Moses you are the best candidate for that position.

At the conclusion of their initial dialogue, Gd granted Moses a spokesman, Aaron, to be his representative and spokesman to bring the message of redemption to the Jewish People and to speak before Pharaoh. While Aaron would speak, Moses was still the only one entrusted with the mission of redemption and to interact with Pharaoh. Where Moses was Gd's emissary, Aaron became Moses' emissary.

Moses returns to Egypt and he and Aaron present the message of Redemption to the people. The people believe them. Next they appear before Pharaoh and their mission meets with disaster. Pharaoh is blasphemous towards Gd and makes life even more difficult for the people. Moses complains to Gd and reiterates his original reason for refusing to act as emissary and that he is not the appropriate person for the job. He has only made matters worse for the people. Gd tells him that he must have patience. Though he does not see the results of his mission yet, soon enough he will.

In their second dialogue, Gd mentions the patriarchs and entrusts Moses with the mission to convey the ארבע לשונות הגאולה, the 4 terms of redemption and the entire Judaic Philosophy that these words represent. Gd contrasts the names through which He appeared to the patriarchs with the name that He appeared to Moses. The typical example of שליחות, appointing an agent, is where someone seeks out the emissary to perform some act on his behalf. While Abraham recognized Gd at an early age, Gd did not communicate with him for many years till He instructed Abraham to travel the land of Canaan. In this case, Abraham was the one searching for Gd. Gd, כביכול, did not search for Abraham. Abraham's relationship (and that of Isaac and Jacob as well) with Gd was one of friendship:

האלקים אשר התהלכו אבותי לפניו אברהם ויצחק האלקים הרועה אותי מעודי (בראשית 48:15) (see Ramban who explain רועה as meaning friendship). The patriarchs were not messengers of Gd. Moses was the first to enjoy a dual relationship with Gd: that of friend and that of messenger, as the Torah says (במדבר 20:16) וישלח מלאך, ויוציאם ממצרים, and Gd sent an emissary and delivered them from Egypt, and the Ramban interprets מלאך as Moses.

Moses's attempt to convey the four terms of redemption to the people again meets with disaster. This time it is not Pharaoh who ignores him, but the Jewish People themselves מקוצר רוח. They were in such a desperate state that they lost the ability to deal with their suffering and were ready to give up. After this depressing result, Gd tells Moses to go to Pharaoh and tell him to release the people. At this point Moses asks rhetorically if he could not convince the Jewish People to listen to him, what hope does he have of convincing Pharaoh?

At this point Gd, כביכול, acquiesces to Moses's request. If Moses feels that he is not capable of speaking to Pharaoh, he will send Aaron along with him. However, Moses must pay a price for this. Up till this point Moses was the sole messenger of Gd sent to free the people. Aaron's place in history was to simply be the messenger of Moses, not a redeemer. Gd offers to elevate Aaron to the level of redeemer alongside Moses, but Moses must pay the price of relinquishing half the title of redeemer of the Jewish People. The message of פקד יפקד was intended to be delivered and fulfilled by one individual. Now that tradition was to be turned on its head as there will be two redeemers. Moses was ready to pay this steep price. It is at that point that Aaron is elevated and they are mentioned interchangeably, הם המדברים אהרן ומשה, הוא משה ואהרן. And at this point it became ויצו, Gd commanded both of them to redeem the people from Egypt. Some of the plagues were brought upon Egypt by Aaron alone, others were brought by Moses alone, yet others were brought jointly, showing that both were equal in this effort to free the people.

Moses retained his status of שליח, agent of Gd. It is interesting to note that Aaron retained his status as the messenger of Moses and that of redeemer alongside Moses. Aaron could be made an equal partner with Moses in the redemption process. However, this did not change the responsibility given to Moses at the burning bush. Moses alone was to be the teacher of the people. He did not share this title or responsibility with Aaron. Moses alone was the greatest of all prophets, and Aaron and Miriam were on a lower level. Aaron's role as Moses's partner was limited to the task of freeing the people from Egypt.

We often wonder how Jewish History would have turned out if certain situations that arose during the exodus and their sojourn in the desert would have unfolded differently. For example, had the spies not been sent the people, Moses himself would have led the Jewish People into the Land of Israel without delay. Moses's refusal to be the sole שליח of Gd to free the people was another such lost opportunity.

The sharing of the role of redeemer was a sensational event. It was unique that a brother would surrender part of his role to another brother. We often find that when someone does something extraordinary, his biography is written up and displayed in the media. This was such an extraordinary event. The Torah tells us about these special brothers and the special family they came from to provide a glimpse into how one brother would willingly relinquish his place in Jewish History as the lone redeemer of the Jewish People to allow his brother to share the

title. That is why the Torah concludes with the lineage of the Tribe of Levi and Moses and Aaron. The Torah started with Reuben because it had to go in birth order to get to Levi (see Rashi). After this sidebar on their lineage, Gd orders them both to go to Pharaoh as co-redeemers to tell him to free the Jewish People.

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