

Moshe was shepherding the sheep of Yisro, his father-in-law, the Priest of Midyan. (3:1)

The Torah is informing us that Moshe *Rabbeinu's* vocation prior to his being selected as the man who would lead the Jewish People from Egypt, and who would shepherd them throughout their desert journey, was a shepherd. The Torah does not waste words. If the Torah mentions Moshe's background, it is because it is vital to his resume as leader. *Chazal* explain that our quintessential leader was first given a "trial run" as Yisro's shepherd, in order to ascertain his leadership abilities. After seeing how Moshe performed as a shepherd, Hashem chose him to lead our ancestors. What did he do that was so special?

Moshe distinguished between the needs of the younger, weaker sheep and the older ones. Young sheep need to drink; they cannot chew tough grass; they tire much quicker than older ones. Moshe's sensitivity to the little things, his empathy for the "little guy," indicated that he possessed the qualities inherent in a great leader.

Horav Shlomo Freifeld, zl, expounds on the idea that an individual's sensitivity to caring about the little things, and the little people in life, determines his ability to be a *manhig*, leader. *Chazal* teach that Hashem is *bochein*, tests, a *tzaddik*, righteous person, concerning his sensitivity to the *bedikah ketaneh*, small things. What is so important about small things? The *Rosh Yeshivah* compares this to the (then) newly-discovered science of molecular biology, chemistry, science. Molecules are something which we cannot see, but are the primary force behind the objects which we do see. He explains that there is tremendous symmetry within the molecular structure, thus allowing it to generate its greatest power. It is not the actual size of a product; it is the harmony, the symmetry, the perfection of its molecular components. One may not ignore the "little" things, the molecules which comprise the things we see. Likewise, in the spiritual dimension, there is a concept of molecular *ruchniyos*, spiritual molecules. A leader who ignores the little things, who lacks sensitivity to the spiritual molecules within each person, who ignores the spiritual molecules within himself – is not fit to be a leader.

Let us delve a little deeper into this idea. *Chazal* (*Pirkei Avos* 2) teach that the world was created through the medium of *Asarah Maamaros*, Ten Divine Utterances. Why? Hashem could just as well have ordained the world into being with one utterance. The *Mishnah* says that Hashem used ten, so that now there is license to punish the wicked who destroy a world through ten utterances. Obviously, *Chazal's* statement leaves us in an even greater quandary. What is achieved/what message is conveyed through the lesson of Ten Utterances?

The *Maharal* explains that the purpose of the Ten Utterances is to demonstrate that there is order and hierarchy in the universe; there is a system. All aspects of the cosmos – both physical and spiritual – function in accordance with a precise system, a vast and beautiful symmetry in which even the tiniest molecule has its place and fits in perfectly. The symmetry of Creation is supported

by *tov*, good, and it is disrupted by *ra*, evil. Thus, good equals symmetry, bad begets chaos and disorder. *Chazal* are teaching us a very important lesson in life. All that supports the symmetry of Creation is good, while all that disrupts it is evil. Good – order; evil – chaos. *Chazal* have provided us with a powerful principle by which to navigate life.

The rules of symmetry are not rigid. Symmetry is fluid. Thus, we treat people with kindness and consideration, because, to do otherwise, would be chaotic and create an imbalance in the order/harmony of Creation. Since symmetry is fluid, we understand that sometimes we must be kind, but, at other times, we need to be cruel. At times, we laugh and are filled with joy, but, at other times, we must weep and mourn because the situation warrants it. This is the meaning of fluid symmetry. It is flexible, moving and changing as it flows through time, through various situations. All it takes is *seichel*, common sense, and *daas*, intelligence, which are both the result of our connection with Torah scholars who teach and hone our ability to think. *Daas* is a derivative of learning Torah from a *rebbe*. We are taught how to think, how to live, when to cry and when to laugh. Thus, we become symmetrical human beings who support Creation.

Simple/little things provide symmetry. They distinguish between a symmetrical moment and a crude experience. A reverberating “Good morning,” rendered with a smile, creates symmetry within a person, causing him to feel happy and put together. That “Good morning,” however simple, makes his day. Rav Freifeld remembers approaching *Horav Arye Levin, zl*, the *tzaddik* of Yerushalayim, at a wedding and giving him *shalom Aleichem* – a simple greeting. The *tzaddik* looked at him, took his hand in both of his and smiled warmly. He conveyed a message: “I care about you. You are important to me.”

Kindness is all-important, but, at times it is necessary to suspend our kind emotions, such as when dealing with cruel, perverted people. To be kind to them means to be cruel to others. This is not symmetrical. Parents have to manifest love and affection toward their children, but we all know that misplaced kindness can be as detrimental as misplaced discipline. One must employ *seichel* (if he has any; if not, he should ask advice and listen). Molding children is one of the most difficult and complex undertakings. One must use *daas* to know what to do and when to do it; otherwise, he will create a lack of symmetry.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* relates hearing of a young child that fell off a fence on *Shabbos* and landed on his head. A young man ran out of his *shul*, his *peyos* flying, threw off his *tallis*, picked up the child, and immediately flagged a taxi to take the child to the hospital. (This occurred before *Hatzalah* had become a household term.) His friend came running over to him, “Perhaps you should not be so rash. Wait. It does not look so bad. There is no reason to be *mechallel*, to desecrate the holy *Shabbos*.” Once again, the significance of *Shabbos* observance is immeasurable, but the symmetry of Creation may call for the opposite.

The *Alter, zl*, *m’Kelm*, **Horav Simcha Zissel Broide**, was the standard bearer of the Kelm Talmud Torah and of the community which also reflected his character and demeanor. The *yeshivah*

maintained the services of a *shamash*, an attendant, who performed menial jobs around the *yeshivah*. He was paid a small salary for his troubles. In addition, he received an additional compensation for all of his troubles: grazing rights for his goat on a grassy plot of land next to the *yeshivah*.

One day, *Rav* Simcha Zissel crossed this plot of land on the way to the *yeshivah*. The students noticed their revered *Rebbe* stop as he was about to enter the *yeshivah*. He bent over, raised his foot and inspected his shoes. He then extracted a few blades of grass that had stuck to the heel of his shoe.

Seeing this, one of the *talmidim* asked, “*Rebbe*, why do you do this?” (This, too, was part of the learning process in Kelm. No action was wasted; no action went unnoticed.)

The *Alter* explained, “You know, of course, that the grass on that little patch belongs to the *shamash*. This is food for his goat. The grass was high, and I was afraid that when I crossed the patch I might have inadvertently taken some of the grass that did not belong to me. So I returned it to its proper place.”

This might be a bit extreme for us, but it certainly bespeaks the level of symmetry achieved by the *Alter m’Kelm*. His life was a work of art, a harmonious image of brilliant and perfect symmetry. For someone of his caliber, a blade of grass that was not his had to be returned to its proper place. We now understand the extent to which Moshe *Rabbeinu* concerned himself with the needs of the young sheep – and why Hashem chose him to be our leader.

Many ascribe to achieve symmetry, but, without the complement of *daas/seichel*, it is difficult. Indeed, what they think is symmetry is, in fact, chaos. Furthermore, once one achieves an exalted position in life, it does not excuse him from striving to maintain symmetry in his life. *Rav* Freifeld relates that he was once in a hotel in Tel Aviv in which the huge dining hall overlooked the Mediterranean Sea. It was truly a breathtaking view. The *Ponevezer Rav*, *zl*, was also staying at that hotel. While *Rav* Freifeld was eating breakfast, *Rebbetzin* Kahaneman, his wife, entered the room and approached the head waiter. They seemed to be looking all over the room for something. The head waiter walked out and returned a few minutes later with a vase. The *Rebbetzin* then proceeded to put a flower into the vase and place it on the table which was designated for the *Ponevezer Rav*. No other table in the dining room had a flower on it. It is the small things that can make a difference. A single flower strategically placed can lift a person’s spirit, enliven his days and bring light into his life. The *Rebbetzin* wanted it for her husband – symmetry.