

Moshe and Aharon came to the Ohel Moed, and they went out and blessed the people – and the glory of Hashem appeared to the entire people. (9:23)

Rashi describes what occurred behind the scenes which necessitated the entry of Moshe *Rabbeinu* into the *Ohel Moed* together with Aharon *HaKohen*. When Aharon saw that all of the offerings had been brought and all of the service in the *Mishkan* had been performed, he was greatly concerned. The *Shechinah* had not descended to *Klal Yisrael*. In his great humility, Aharon blamed himself: “I know that Hashem has become angry with me, and it is because of me that the *Shechinah* has not descended to the nation.” Aharon approached his brother and said, “Moshe, thus you have done to me; that I entered and performed the service, because you asked me to – and I was humiliated. The *Shechinah* did not descend. It is because of me.” Immediately upon hearing this, Moshe entered with Aharon, and together they pleaded for mercy. As a result, the *Shechinah* descended.

Afterwards, Moshe and Aharon went out and blessed the people. Once again, *Rashi* explains that this was to allay any fears the people might have had concerning their lack of acceptance. For all Seven Days of the Inauguration, during which Moshe put up the *Mishkan*, officiated in it, and then dismantled it, the *Shechinah* did not rest in it. The people were ashamed. They said to Moshe, “Our master! We went to so much trouble that the *Shechinah* should repose among us. This would be a clear indication from Above that we have been forgiven for the sin of the Golden Calf. Now, we see that we have labored for nothing.” Therefore, Moshe said to them, “This is the thing that Hashem has commanded you to do; then the glory of Hashem will appear to you Aharon, my brother, is worthier and more important than I. For through his offerings and his service, the *Shechinah* will rest among you. Thus, you will know that the Almighty has chosen him.”

What seems to be a simple interpretation by *Rashi* is explained by **Horav Boruch Moshe Ezrachi, Shlita**, as a powerful lesson in interpersonal relationships. Imagine the situation as Aharon entered the *Mishkan*. Let us take the time frame into context. It was not long after the creation of the Golden Calf, the sin that continues to haunt us until this very day. We can still hear the reverberations of a nation gone wild with lust and depravation, bowing to a molten facsimile of divinity. It was idol-worship at its nadir. Perhaps they had not all been involved, but, other than *Shevet Levi*, the Tribe of *Levi*, no one else seemed to have stood up to the revelers. Regrettably, Aharon had a role in this act. It was an awkward role, as he attempted to delay the people. Yet, this giant felt responsible; he was contrite and filled with humiliation. His worst fears of rejection seemed to have been realized when, after seven days of service, the *Shechinah* had not yet descended. He turned to his brother as if to say, “How could you do this to me? You knew that I was unworthy of this honor!”

Moshe had reason to be mute, to turn a deaf ear to his entreaty. After all, the Golden Calf was the reason that Moshe had broken the *Luchos*. He must have had “feelings” about that, the precursor which had led up to that tragic moment. Moshe could have – and many other would have – found it

difficult to overlook the past. When Moshe saw his brother's humiliation, he immediately decided that one thing takes precedence over the devastating sin of the Golden Calf: *bein adam l'chaveiro*, interpersonal relationships, between man and his fellowman. Moshe could not allow his brother to stand there in shame. He immediately entered with Aharon to entreat the Almighty for mercy. Hashem listened, because nothing stands in the way of a person's pain. The laws concerning *bein adam l'chaveiro*, interpersonal relationships, are on a completely different plane.

Likewise, when the *Mishkan* "refused" to remain erect, because the Jewish nation was not worthy of an edifice of such unprecedented sanctity in its midst, Moshe once again intervened. Whatever "issues" there might have been, it could not be at the expense of the nation's humiliation. Their feelings were hurt. Nothing stands in the way of *bein adam l'chaveiro*. Nothing!

In his biography of the *Telshe Rosh Yeshivah*, **Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl**, Rabbi Yechiel Spero quotes from an article that the *Rosh Yeshivah* wrote in the Jewish Parent magazine: "Every human being is part of the great family of Mankind; and if one is really to enjoy life, he must share with others that which has been granted to him," *Naeh doreish v'naeh mekayeim*. Rav Gifter practiced what he preached. He was a *mussar sefer*, his very essence comprised volumes of ethical character refinement, dedicated to the enhancement of interpersonal relationships.

Many episodes are related in the book concerning the caring of the *Rosh Yeshivah* for others. I think the one which encapsulates his life is not a story that involved him, but rather, a story that he would often relate. His choice of story gives us some insight into his value quotient for interpersonal relationships. **Horav Itzele Ponovezer, zl**, was Rav and *Rosh Yeshivah* of Ponevez. As Rav and *Rosh Yeshivah*, it was difficult for him to also assume the responsibility of handling the *yeshivah's* finances. He, therefore, appointed someone to function as the *yeshivah's* financial director. When World War I broke out, the man lost his son in the war. This caused him to descend into a deep melancholy and eventually to neglect his responsibilities to the *yeshivah*. Everyone, including Rav Itzele, tried to help this man, but his depression had taken a terrible toll on his mind. He could not snap out of it; he could not function in his position. They could not simply hire someone else, since it was he alone who had been working on a daily basis with the banks, and, without him, the *yeshivah* accounts were frozen. The *yeshivah's* finances had plummeted and were now in a desperate state.

It was suggested to the *Rosh Yeshivah* that perhaps the secular courts could "convince" this man to do his job. Rav Itzele presented the question to **Horav Chaim Soloveitchick, zl**. His response demonstrates to what lengths one must go to ensure that he does not hurt another Jew. Rav Chaim said that it would be better to shutter up the *yeshivah* than to risk the fellow falling into a deeper depression, which might result in his life being at risk from self-inflicted harm. He said, "The power of Torah study does not override saving a life; and, if necessary, it is worthwhile to close the *yeshivah*, so as not to cause another's demise."

In order to carry out one's responsibility towards his fellow Jew properly, he must, as Rav Gifter

writes, feel that he is part of the great family of mankind. One must feel the pain of his fellow. I had the opportunity to witness such a sentiment this past year during a trip to *Eretz Yisrael*. I had the *z'chus*, merit, to visit *Horav Shachne Zohn, zl*, to petition his blessing on behalf of a young woman who was suffering at the hands of her recalcitrant husband. Since the sage had great difficulty hearing, he motioned for me to write my request on paper – which I did. He began to read my words, and, as he continued to read, tears flowed down his face onto his beard. My grandson was watching this in astonishment. He looked at me as if to ask, “What gives?” I replied, “He feels her pain.” That is greatness.