

Now you, bring near to yourself Aharon, your brother, and his sons with him... to minister to me. (28:1)

Hashem instructs Moshe *Rabbeinu* to induct Aharon and his sons into the *Kehunah*, Priesthood, with Aharon becoming the *Kohen Gadol*, High Priest. At first, Moshe functioned as the *Kohen Gadol*, but he lost that status due to his rejection of the opportunity to lead *Klal Yisrael* out of Egypt. He suggested that Aharon, his older brother, become the nation's leader. In a second exposition, *Chazal* (*Shemos Rabbah* 37:4) teach that Moshe was unhappy when Hashem instructed him to induct Aharon into the Priesthood. Hashem countered, "The Torah was mine, and I gave it to you. If not for it (the Torah) I would have destroyed My world." *Chazal* supplement this with an analogy to a wise man who married his relative. After ten years passed without a child being born to them, he told his wife, "Please search for a wife for me. I could have done this by myself. However, I do not want to do anything without your knowledge and input." Likewise, Hashem said to Moshe, "I could have appointed Aharon as *Kohen* without discussing it with you. However, I want you to stand over him and make sure that he is acting properly."

According to the above, Hashem's instructing Moshe to induct Aharon was, in a sense, for the purpose of assuaging Moshe's pain at being "passed over" for the *Kehunah*. Rather, Hashem wanted Moshe to be the one to give over the *Kehunah* to Aharon. This way, Moshe remained involved in the process, and Aharon would be forever cognizant that he received the *Kehunah* via Moshe. When we see how far Hashem went to be certain not to give Moshe any ill feelings, we derive a lesson on how we should act in our interpersonal relationships.

According to the *Midrash*, Moshe was not happy that Aharon was assuming the *Kehunah Gedolah*, since during the *Shivas Yemei Milluim*, seven days of the inauguration service, Moshe had served as *Kohen Gadol*. No one enjoys giving up his position. Moshe *Rabbeinu* certainly was not objecting due to trivial envy. He sought every opportunity to serve and become closer to Hashem. Why should he lose an opportunity? All of this is true and even laudatory, but was it not Moshe that told Hashem to designate Aharon to lead the Jews out of Egypt? What changed that provoked Moshe's reaction to the transfer of the *Kehunah* to Aharon?

Horav Baruch Dov Povarsky, Shlita, explains that Moshe definitely did not want the *Kehunah* for personal reasons. He was surely happy to delegate the *Kehunah* to his brother, Aharon. Hashem, however, appointed Moshe as the *manhig Yisrael*, leader of the nation, and, as such, he had a *din of melech*; in other words, he was *halachically* viewed as the king. Moshe felt that in his position of leader and king, he should also be the High Priest. By functioning in all of these positions, he would be able to guide the nation to a higher level of *shleimus*, perfection. Hashem responded to Moshe's query, "The Torah was mine, and I gave it to you." This means the *maaleh*, asset/benefit, of Torah supersedes everything. Its *kedushah*, sanctity, rises above *kehunah*. If one achieves distinction in Torah, he has acquired the ultimate plateau in the spiritual hierarchy of *Klal Yisrael*. Torah is the "engine" that governs and drives every spiritual endeavor in which we are involved.

With this principle in mind, I think we may be able to shed light on the *Ridbaz's* elucidation of this *Midrash*. He explains that Moshe had no angst over the selection of Aharon to be *Kohen Gadol*. He could accept his brother as High Priest. What troubled him was the second part of the message, "and his sons with him." Moshe did not merit to see his sons in positions whereby they would succeed him as the leaders of *Klal Yisrael*. Inheritance goes just so far. It works for *Kehunah*, and it works for *malchus*, monarchy. Torah is in a different realm. As Hashem told Moshe, "The Torah was mine, and I gave it to you." Torah is not the possession of any one single individual. The Torah belongs to Hashem, and He gives it to whomever He deems worthy.

Let me explain. *Torah tzivah lanu Moshe, morashah kehillas Yaakov*, "The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Yaakov" (*Devarim* 33:44). The word *morashah*, heritage, is related to *yerushah*, inheritance. The *Mordechai* writes that just as an inheritance is divided equally among all children regardless of their aptitude or wisdom, likewise, the Torah belongs to all Jews equally; each and every Jew – in accordance with his individual capacities – is capable of acquiring a portion in the Torah. The Torah belongs to Hashem, and He is constantly giving it to whomever is worthy of its receipt. *Kehunah* was given once to Aharon; *malchus* was given to David *Hamelech*. Torah is the gift that "keeps on giving." We all inherit it equally.

Achieving greatness in Torah has nothing whatsoever to do with acumen. While it is certainly true that one who is blessed with a sharp mind might find the material easier to absorb, his responsibility to achieve is even greater as a result of his head start. In *Devarim* 30:6, the Torah writes *U'mal Hashem Elokecha es levavcha... l'maan chayecha*, "Hashem, your G-d, will circumcise your heart... that you may live." The *Maggid, zl, m'Dubno* explains that when Hashem circumcises a person's heart, the person (whose heart was heretofore sealed) begins to feel the pleasure and sweetness inherent in Torah study and *mitzvah* performance. They, (Torah study and *mitzvah* observance) in turn, cause him to "live" in the same manner that one lives via such physical pleasures as eating, driving, sleeping, etc. This sense of spiritual living is real. When he enters the *bais hamedrash*, he feels the walls beckoning him to enter; when he opens up his *Gemorah*, he experiences such intense excitement that his heart is overflowing with joy at the opportunity to learn.

After the *Kotzker Rebbe's* passing, the *chassidim* gravitated to his appointed successor, the *Chidushei HaRim, zl*, the first *Gerrer Rebbe*. He chose to make his residence in Ger, Poland, which became a vibrant center for Torah *Chassidus* until the devastation wrought by the Nazis during World War II. His *chassidim* built a beautiful edifice to serve as the *Rebbe's* new *bais hamedrash*.

Thousands of *chassidim* from throughout Poland convened for the *chanukas habayis*, inauguration, of the *shul*. The *Rebbe* spoke the following words that day, focusing on the well-known passage in *Chazal (Berachos 28a)*: "The day that Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah became *Nasi*, they removed the doorman from the study hall and permission was granted to all who sought to study Torah to enter. When *Rabban Gamliel* was *Nasi*, he would proclaim and say: 'Any student who is not *tocho*

k'baro (inside commensurate with his outside, i.e., genuinely sincere) may not enter the study hall.' That day, many benches were added to accommodate the new students (one opinion is 400 benches; others say 700). Upon seeing this development, *Rabban Gamliel* became dispirited, wondering; 'Did I, Heaven forbid, withhold Torah from *Yisrael*?' *Rashi* explains that *Rabban Gamliel* feared that he would be punished for preventing more students from joining the ranks of the *yeshivah* students."

The *Chidushei HaRim* asked: "What caused *Rabban Gamliel* to regret his policy denying entry to a student who was insincere?" How did the addition of benches (with people to sit on them) alter his policy? He did what was appropriate. If he were willing to permit insincere students to join the others, he would have an overflowing *bais hamedrash*. He did not want that. Who is to say that his previous selection process was flawed?

The *Rebbe* explained that when the insincere students entered the *bais hamedrash*, they immediately became influenced by the spiritual luminance of the *bais hamedrash*, and their hearts became "circumcised," so that they could now "live" the sweetness and pleasure of learning. Thus, they became better and achieved sincerity.

When *Rabban Gamliel* observed this transformation, he began to worry that perhaps he had withheld Torah from the Jewish People, since had he allowed them to enter and cross the threshold of the *bais hamedrash*, they would have been inspired by its spiritual vitality.

The *Rebbe* concluded with his charge to the *chassidim*: "We, too, have to make sure the light of our *bais hamedrash* shines on all who enter, imbuing them with the joy of learning."

We might suggest that the *chassidim* must be made comfortable enough to acquiesce to entering. Today they might appear unsuitable and thus discouraged, but who wants to assume responsibility for turning away a potential *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, just because of external appearances and (perhaps) behavior that leaves much to be desired?

While we are addressing the concept of inheriting a position, I quote a story from the *Sefer Chassidim* (758) (quoted from *Aleinu l'shabeiach*), which is unusual, and, as such, very inspiring. Inheritances can become contentious and filled with acrimony, at times tearing apart loving relationships that had existed (or were thought to exist) in families for a lifetime. Furthermore, they are everything but an *illui neshamah*, perpetuation of the soul, of the deceased. They forget that the one who is *mevater*, gives in, earns and reaps the greatest blessing. This is the story of a *chazzan*, who had led the services for many years, had earned the respect and admiration of the *kahal*, congregation, and, as a result, had the "rights" to the position. When he became old, he informed the leaders of the *shul* that he was retiring as *chazzan*. This decision stunned the members of the community, since his voice was still strong and melodious. From their standpoint, he certainly could continue.

Finally, after much prodding by the congregation, the *Chazzan* relented and explained the reason for his decision, “The position of *Chazzan*,” he began, “is such that it traditionally passes on to the *Chazzan*’s son. Hashem blessed me with wonderful sons, all of whom are eminently qualified to step into the position of *Chazzan* and do well. Others in the community, however, are more qualified to serve as *Chazzan* I was concerned that if I continue as *Chazzan* until Hashem prevents me from continuing, my sons will automatically inherit my position, although others exceed their qualifications. I, therefore, decided to resign in order that my family’s *chazakah*, rights, to the position be severed.”

I wrote that the story was unusual, since “keeping it in the family” is something for which people will go to war. It is also inspiring to read about those who place the needs of the community of others above their own. Perhaps this was the objective of the *Sefer Chassidim* when he included the story in his *sefer*.