

Good Shabbos, and a *freilichen* Shushan Purim, everyone. I hope everyone had an enjoyable Purim!

Mazel Tov to Moshe Scott on the occasion of his Bar Mitzva this Shabbos. Mazel Tov, and welcome, to all the family and friends who are here to share in the *simcha*.

Thank you to the drasha sponsors:

- Chaim and Heather Haber, in memory of Chaim's brother, Joram Haber, whose yahrtzeit is 16 Adar. May his *neshama* have an *aliyah*.
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- Cheryl and Ethan Spiegler, in honor of the Bar Mitzvah of their grandson, Elisha Shore, son of Michael and Ayelet Shore. Mazel Tov! May you have much continued *nachas* from Elisha, Michael, Ayelet, and all your children and grandchildren!

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There seems to be a glaring omission in the Megilla. We are used to seeing the “star of the show,” the “protagonist,” the “hero of the play” prominently featured—front and center—with their name and face all over the story. Yet, when we read the *Book of Esther*, Hashem, the real hero in the story, is missing from the storyline. His name does not appear at all in the story. This is the only book in Tanach, besides Shir Hashirim (which is an allegory) where Hashem’s name is missing. The text is focused on the people; *Baruch Mordechai* and *Arur Haman*, *Brucha Esther* and *Arura Zeresh*. *V’gam Charvona zachur latov*. But what about Hashem?

We understand that, for those who were alive in Persia approximately 2,500 years ago, Hashem’s presence and His role in the events of the day was not clear. Hashem was behind the scenes.

As the **Vilna Gaon** explains in his commentary on the Megilla, based on the **Gemara in Chullin 139b**, the story of Esther is the classic example of God working from the shadows.

פירוש הגר"א על מגילת אסתר: ומ"ש אסתר מן התורה מנין פ"י היכן מרומז שאפילו בהסתר פנים דהיינו גלות עושה לנו נסים נס גדול כזה. ואמרו דכתיב ואנכי הסתר אסתיר פני ביום ההוא; פ"י אפילו בשעת הסתר פנים תשלה את אסתר.

But when the story was recorded by Mordechai and Esther with *ruach hakodesh*—and the “coincidences” clearly show Yad Hashem **why leave His name out?** Why not use the Megilla as an opportunity to give credit to Hashem? Why not state clearly and unequivocally--it was Hashem all along? Why not come out and “show his face” in the Megilla? Isn’t that the goal of reading the story—to see Hashem in the world of nature! We say in the bracha, הרב את ריבנו, in present tense, because we must learn from the Megilla story that Hashem is present and active in our lives.

Before we answer this question, I want to focus on a second “omission” in Tana”ch. In Parshas Tetzave, Moshe is missing from the story. This is the only time—from his birth until his death--where his name is not mentioned, even once, in an entire Parsha. And it is not because he was not part of the story. In the first Pasuk, Moshe is told ואתה תצוה you shall instruct. He is still running the show, no different than his role in other parts of the Mishkan’s construction--collecting, directing, organizing. So, why not mention his name?

Before we answer these two questions, let us first explore a third omission—not in Tana”ch, but in the *Haggadah*, another important text where Moshe Rabbeinu’s name is missing. Of all places! In the story of *Yitzias Mitzrayim*, Moshe’s name is ubiquitous. Why leave him out of the Haggadah?

**Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twersky**, zt”l, in his commentary on the haggadah, *From Bondage to Freedom: Every astute reader of the Haggadah will be struck with a glaring omission: The central figure of the Exodus is absent from the account. Except for a single incidental and seemingly accidental mention, the great liberator, Moses, who is associated with every facet of the Exodus, does not appear in the Haggadah. Is this not strange? The answer is rather simple. The first Mitzva of relating the story of the Exodus appears in Exodus 10:2, where God says to Moses וְלִמְעַן תְּסַפֵּר בְּאָזְנֵי בְנֶיךָ “In order that you may tell your children...the miracles that I did.” The immediate application of this Mitzva could not have been meant for the Israelites that were in Egypt and who participated in the Exodus, because their children had personally witnessed each stage—the enslavement, the ten plagues, and dividing of the Red Sea—and there was no point in reiterating these events to them. The only Israelites who did not experience these miraculous events firsthand were the children of Moses, who were in Midian with Jethro. Therefore, the first actual narration of the exodus was when Moses told his children all that had transpired. Moses’ narrative to his children thus constituted the first Haggadah. Now, וְהָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה עֲנִי מִשָּׁה עָנְיִי מֵאֵד מִפְּלִ הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר עָלִי פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה, Moses was the most humble of all men on earth (Numbers 12:3). Moses therefore minimized his own role, and did not say, “I did this” or “I did that.” Since he composed the first Haggadah, he deleted any reference to himself from the narrative. Subsequently, when the narrative was elaborated and expanded, it followed the very first model, with the role of Moses omitted. In addition to everything else we learn from the Haggadah, it also teaches an invaluable teaching of humility.*

I would like to suggest, in a similar vein, that Hashem did not want His name to be mentioned in the Megilla in order to teach the same lesson—humility. While we need to notice Hashem, Hashem does not have a need to be noticed. The Purim story has G-d’s influence everywhere, but He did not want it to be a story about Himself. The Purim story is influenced by G-d, but it is the story of man. It is the story of Esther’s bravery, and the story of the Jewish people who returned to Hashem with great devotion when they realized that they were in danger. It is as if Hashem says, “I am perfectly comfortable influencing all, but hiding My name. This story is not about Me.” Hashem says, “I don’t need the credit. It is about you and the decisions that you make in life.” That is why He runs the world in a way that gives us space to influence our environment and shape our own destiny. We live in world, in Hebrew called עולם, which comes from the language of העלם...because Hashem hides himself to focus on us!

As the **Ramchal** writes in *Derech Hashem* (I:2:1):

דרך ה' חלק א פרק ב אות א:א. הנה התכלית בבריאה היה להיטיב מטובו, יתברך שמו, לזולתו.

*The function of Hashem’s creation of the world is to do kindness for others, to allow mankind to excel.*

And this is one explanation for the absence of Moshe’s name in Parshas Tetzave. As the **Baal HaTurim** writes בעל הטורים שמות פרשת תצוה פרק כז פסוק כ

(כ) ואתה תצוה. לא הזכיר משה בזה הסדר, מה שאין כן בכל החומש, שמשעה שנולד משה אין סדר שלא הוזכר בה. והטעם משום שאמר מחני נא מספרך אשר כתבת (להלן לב לב) (זהר פנחס רמו א) וקללת חכם אפילו על תנאי באה (מכות יא א), ונתקיים בזה.

*Moshe advocated for the Jewish people and said to Hashem, if you “erase” the Jewish people, please erase me from your Book.*

This is an example of real humility. Moshe is so focused and concerned with the Jewish people that he cast his lot with them to such a degree that he tells Hashem—if they are destroyed—I want to go down with them. He has tied his destiny to theirs. This is the ultimate in *anava*. He is the confident and dedicated leader who goes down with the ship. He is the selfless person who is always looking out for others—it is never about himself.

Anava is the *midda* of Avraham Avinu—who is known for both faith and kindness—because they are rooted in the same *midda*—that of selflessness—allowing space for others. It's not about him. In the immortal words of **C.S. Lewis**—*humility is not about thinking less of yourself, it is about thinking of yourself less*. Moshe's name is missing to show that, like Hashem, he was interested in the people's success. He was not interested in his own glamour or self-aggrandizement, so he was willing to erase his name from the Book, after everything he had done. And that is true leadership—focusing on the cause and helping others. On his desk in the Oval Office, **President Reagan** kept a small plaque with the words: “**There is no limit to what a man can do or where he can go if he does not mind who gets the credit.**” **This is a lesson from Moshe.**

But this *midda* of selflessness can be taken too far—“thinking of yourself less” can easily lead to “thinking less of yourself,” and can lead to a lack of self-esteem and low self-worth. The **Rambam** writes very clearly that humility is not self-abasement—but can easily slide in that direction.

פירושו המשנה לרמב"ם מסכת אבות – שמונה פרקים פרק ד והעונה, ממוצעת בין הגאווה ושפלות הרוח.

The **Baal HaTurim** brings this cautionary tale as another reason why Moshe is not mentioned.

ועוד דזו הפרשה מדברת בטכסיסי כהונה וממשה היתה הכהונה הגדולה לצאת, אלא על ידי שסירב לילך בשליחות המקום נטלה ממנו ונתנה לאהרן (זבחים קב א). לכן לא נזכר שמו של משה בפרשה זו מפני עגמת נפשו (עיין שמו"ר לו ד).

*Moshe hesitated to lead the Jewish people and therefore was denied the position of Kohen Gadol.*

When Moshe was first asked to rescue the Jewish people, he responded: who am I?

שמות פרשת שמות (ג יא) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים מִי אֲנֹכִי כִּי אֵלֶּךָ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה וְכִי אוֹצִיא אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרָיִם:

*But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and free the Israelites from Egypt?”*

רש"י שמות פרשת שמות פרק ג פסוק יא: (יא) מי אנכי - מה אני חשוב לדבר עם המלכים:

**Rashi explains WHO AM I? — Of what importance am I that I should speak with monarchs?**

Similarly, it should have been obvious to Esther that she was placed with true serendipity in the King's palace to help her people, yet she questions it...I wasn't called...

אסתר פרק ד פסוק י - יז

(י) וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לְהַתְּמָד וּתְצַנְחֶנּוּ אֶל־מֶרְדֵּכָי: (יא) כָּל־עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעַם־מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ יוֹדְעִים אֲשֶׁר כָּל־אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יְבֹא־אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־הַחֲצַר הַפְּנִימִית אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִקְרָא אֶתְּוֹתָו לֹא־יָקֻרָא אֶתְּוֹתָו לְבֹד מֵאֲשֶׁר יוֹשִׁיט־לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־ שַׁרְבִיט הַזֶּהָב וְתִגָּב וְתִגָּב וְאִנִּי לֹא נִקְרָאתִי לְבֹאֵ אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ זֶה שְׁלוֹשִׁים יוֹם:

10: *Esther told Hathach to take back to Mordecai the following reply:*

11: “*All the king's courtiers and the people of the king's provinces know that if any person, man or woman, enters the king's presence in the inner court without having been summoned, there is but one law for him—that he be put to death. Only if the king extends the golden scepter to him may he live. Now I have not been summoned to visit the king for the last thirty days.*”

But real humility means it isn't about you...it is about the cause—what you can do. What you were placed in the world to accomplish. It is about looking at your talents, and abilities, and circumstances, and seeing them as opportunities to help others and to bring honor to Hashem.

Thus, Hashem rebuked Moshe—if I gave you a mission—I gave you the tools to accomplish it...

שמות פרשת שמות פרק ד פסוק יא

(יא) וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹנֶךָ אֵלֶי מִי שָׁם פֶּה לְאָדָם אוֹ מִי־יְשׁוּם אֵלֶם אוֹ חֹרֵשׁ אוֹ פֶקֶח אוֹ עֵגֶר הֲלֹא אֲנֹכִי יְקֹנֶךָ:

And Mordechai rebuked Esther—and told her that you are being given an opportunity to help your people.

(יד) כִּי אִם־הִתְרַשׁ פְּתַרְיִשִׁי כְּעַתְּ הַזֹּאת רְחוּ וְהִצַּלְהוּ וְעָמְדוּ לְיְהוּדִים מִמְּקוֹם אַחֵר וְאֶת־וּבֵית־אֲבִיךָ תֹאבְדוּ וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ אִם־לֵעֵת כְּזֹאת הִנְעֵתָ לְמַלְכוּת:

14: *On the contrary, if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter, while you and your father's house will perish. And who knows, perhaps you have attained to royal position for just such a crisis.*"

Because this isn't about you. Get over yourself, your anxiety, and your low self-worth—and focus completely on what you can do for others; what talents and abilities you have been given, and circumstances of your life. Think of yourself less—and you will find the inner strength to accomplish so much more; you will discover new abilities to help others.

As the Ramchal writes in *Mesilas Yeshtarim* (ch. 22), true *anava* is about seeing yourself in terms of the tools Hashem gave you, understanding for what purpose, and determining how to best use them...

**ספר מסילת ישרים פרק כב**

אלא אם יש בו חכמה רבה הוא מחויב ללמדה למי שצריך אליה, וכמאמר ריב"ז (אבות ב:ט): אם למדת תורה הרבה אל תחזיק טובה לעצמך כי לכך נוצרת. אם עשיר הוא ישמח בחלקו, ועליו הוא לעזור למי שאין לו, אם גבור הוא לעזור לכושלים ולהציל לעשוקים. הא למה זה דומה למשרתי הבית, שכל אחד ממונה על דבר מה, וראוי לו לעמוד במשמרתו לפי פקודתו, להשלים מלאכת הבית וצרכיה, ואין בכאן מקום לגאווה לפי האמת.

*Rather, if he possess great wisdom, behold, he is under duty to teach it to those in need of it, similar to the statement of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai: "if you learned much Torah, do not take credit for yourself since for this you were created!" (Avot 2:8). If he is wealthy, he may rejoice in his lot, but it is incumbent upon him to help those who do not have. If he is strong, he must help those who are weak and rescue the oppressed. To what is this similar? To servants in a household where each one is charged with a matter and it is incumbent on each to stand on his appointed position to uphold the affairs and needs of the house. In truth, there is no place for pride here.*

As **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks** wrote, *Humility is not what it is sometimes taken to be – a low estimate of oneself. That is false or counterfeit humility. True humility is mindlessness of self. An anav (the biblical word used in this chapter) is one who never thinks about himself because he has more important things to think about. I once heard someone say about a religious leader: "He took G-d so seriously that he didn't need to take himself seriously at all." That is biblical humility...*

*Humility is not self-abasement. It is not self-anything. It is the ability to stand in silent awe in the presence of otherness – the Thou of G-d, the otherness of other people, the majesty of creation, the beauty of the world, the power of great ideas, the call of great ideals. Humility is the silence of the self in the presence of that which is greater than the self...Humility – true humility – is one of the most expansive and life-enhancing of all virtues. It does not mean undervaluing yourself. It means valuing other people. It signals an openness to life's grandeur and the willingness to be surprised, uplifted, by goodness wherever one finds it.*

**Rav Yehonasan Eibeshitz** writes that Mordechai was a *gilgul neshama* of Moshe Rabbeinu, properly expressing the same *midda* of *anava*—the attitude that one should think about others...and what they can do for them.

יערות דבש חלק א דרוש ג: והמקובלים אמרו, כי מרדכי גלגול וניצוץ משה, והמן איש מצרי שנהרג ממנו, ולכך ביקש לנקום נקמתו, ואסתר ניצוץ בת' בת פרעה, ולכך לקחה לכך מרדכי לו לבת [אסתר ב, ז], ומלבד זה מבואר במדרש [אגדתא דאסתר מדרש פנים אחרים ע"פ איש יהודי] כל שאתה מוצא במשה אתה מוצא במרדכי ע"ש,

As the **Ibn Ezra** writes about Mordechai:

**אסתר פרק י פסוק ג: (ג) ק'ו מְרַבֵּי הַיְהוּדִי... דָּרַשׁ טוֹב לַעֲמֹו וְדָבַר שְׁלוֹם לְכָל-זָרְעוֹ:**

*he sought the good of his people and interceded for the welfare of all his kindred.*

**אבן עזרא אסתר י ג הזכיר הכתוב גודל מעלתו וענותנותו כאשר הזכיר כן על משה אדונינו והאיש משה עניו מאד מכל האדם;**

*The verse is pointing out Mordechai's greatness and his humility, similar to Moshe who is called the most humble.*

May we learn from Moshe Rabbeinu, Mordechai HaTzadik, and Esther HaMalka—to push ourselves in terms of what we can accomplish; to think more of how we can help others—and use our God-given gifts to bring Hashem's glory to the world...amen.