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Parshas Va'eira 5781

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Pursuing Our Mission

I experienced a few spectacular revelations this week. I was listening to a shiur by Rabbi Daniel Glatstein and he mentioned that oftentimes authors of *sefarim* will give their *sefer* a title that has the same gematria as the name of the author. For example, the *Sefer HaRoke'ach* (רקח) corresponds to the author's first name of Eleazar of Worms (אלעזר) each with a gematria of 308.

I haven't written a *sefer*, but I did start the MaayanHaTorah.com website last year and do send out these weekly emails under the same name. I use the name Maayan HaTorah because this endeavor is not about me – it's about the Torah I am sharing. I didn't want to use my own name, but I did want some connection to the title. So when considering the dozens of names I came up with, I liked the name Maayan because it is an acronym for me (**Moshe**), my wife (**Ariella Aliza**), our son (**Yisrael**), our daughter (**Aviva**), and our last name (**Novack**). And the meaning of Maayan (מַעַיִן) was appealing since it means a *wellspring* or *spring of water* and the point of the website and emails is to be a source, a *wellspring*, for sharing Torah.

After I listened to Rabbi Glatstein's shiur, I was curious how the gematria of my name compared to that of Maayan HaTorah. So, I calculated that מעין התורה equals 786. Then, I calculated that the gematria of my Hebrew name משה יעקב נובק equals 685. At first, I was sorry that they didn't match up and I was ready to move on and put the thought behind me. Then, I realized something. The difference between the two totals is 101. That is exactly the gematria of מיכאל (*Micha'el*), my English name, Michael!

Another incredible insight I learned in Rabbi Glatstein's [shiur](#) is that the Ben Ish Chai teaches that Micha'el equals the hidden letters when spelling the name of Moshe. משה is spelled מ"מ – the hidden letter is מ (40), then ש"ן – the hidden letters are י"ן (60), and then ה"א – the hidden letter is א (1). The total value of the hidden letters in Moshe's name is 101 for מיכאל (*Micha'el*).

But nothing happens without Hashem's direct involvement. So, my own take on this idea as it relates to me personally is that the hidden letters of my name משה (*Moshe*) which are מ"מ could stand for משה יעקב נובק (*Moshe Yaakov Novack*) needs to be connected with 'א – Hashem. Success comes with the help of Hashem, with a relationship with Hashem. The more we recognize Him, the more opportunity for success we create. The more we seek Him, the more He reveals Himself to us.

In researching this, I also learned something amazing about how Moshe and Micha'el are both related to water. The first letter of משה (*Moshe*) is מ which stands for מים (*water*) and Princess Batyah famously named Moshe for the meaning *drawn from the water* - מִן־הַמַּיִם מְשִׁיתָהוּ. And the Midrash Tanchuma (Vayigash 6) states that the angel Micha'el was fashioned from water - מִיכָאֵל מִן־הַמַּיִם. So, both of my names relate to water and I just "happened" to choose a name for this Torah endeavor that directly means a *wellspring* or *spring of water*. Incredible!

The lesson I learned from all of this is that when Moshe and Michael come together with the help of Hashem, then I have the potential of success with Maayan HaTorah. When the quiet, introspective, learning side of Moshe meets the social, extroverted side of Michael, then Maayan HaTorah has a chance to fulfill its potential and be set up for success with Heavenly help from Hashem – *Siyata Dishmaya*. Learning Torah is wonderful, but sharing it is even better.

I discuss the above as it relates to my efforts with Maayan HaTorah. However, as far as I go as an individual, I have a lifetime of work ahead of me of teshuva, refining and working on my *midot*, continuing toiling in my Torah learning, and improving my relationships between myself and other people and myself and Hashem. There's a lot more work for me pursuing my mission.

In this week's parsha, Va'eira, we have two examples of our leaders who not only pursued their missions, but fulfilled their personal missions 100%. We see Moshe and Aaron are named in two consecutive pesukim: Perek 6, Pasuk 26 – *הוא אהרן ומשה: – This was the Aaron and Moshe.* Then, the end of the following Pasuk 27 says – *הוא משה ואהרן: – this was the Moshe and Aaron.*

Rashi states that there are places where the Torah puts Aaron before Moshe and there are places where it puts Moshe before Aaron to say that they are of equal significance. They remained steadfast in their mission and in their righteousness from beginning to end. According to the Mizrachi, Rashi goes on to interpret Pasuk 27 as referring to Moshe's and Aaron's righteousness through their entire mission. Gemara Megillah (11a) explains that the word *הוא* in describing Moshe and Aaron teaches they are examples of consistently good and humble characters since they remained in their righteousness their entire lives.

The Devek Tov says that the Torah has already made it very clear that Moshe and Aaron were the ones sent as Hashem's emissaries to Pharaoh. The repetition of that fact in these pesukim tells us that they fulfilled Hashem's command and therefore their mission.

The Midrash Rabbah (1:15) writes that in virtually every place, the Torah places Moshe before Aaron, but here in our Pasuk 27 it's one of the couple times the Torah lists Aaron first teaching that the two of them are of equal significance. The Eitz Yosef, citing Yefeh To'ar, maintains that the Midrash means that they were equal in piety and righteousness, but not in prophecy.

The Tzeidah Laderech notes that in Pasuk 26, when the Torah is speaking of the mission to redeem the Jewish people, you would think that Moshe was more important. Therefore, the Torah writes Aaron's name first. Similarly, in Pasuk 27 when the Torah mentions that they were appointed to speak to Pharaoh, one would presume that Aaron was more important since he was the spokesman. Therefore, the Torah mentions Moshe first. In both instances, the Torah does this to stress that they were equal in this respect.

The Be'er Mayim Chaim says that Moshe and Aaron were found worthy of attaining the highest levels of holiness and receiving the Divine gift of prophetic vision. And they remained on this high level even after their contact with the heathen Pharaoh. Their holiness was so profound that they were not defiled even by the corrupt atmosphere prevailing Pharaoh's court.

The Chasam Sofer explains similarly that Moshe and Aaron did not change their personalities or appearance to fit their mission. Unlike other prophets, they didn't undergo a spiritual transformation when speaking to Hashem nor did they become less spiritual with Pharaoh.

Rav Simcha Sheps has a beautiful explanation on our two pesukim. He says that Aaron was appreciated for his enthusiasm. Ten times Aaron and Moshe went to Pharaoh to carry out their sacred mission to free the Jews from Egypt. Each time Pharaoh changed his mind and refused to let them go. Under normal circumstances, when you do something over and over and it

doesn't work, you become disheartened. You lose your desire to keep trying. From here we see how one must view every mitzvah with enthusiasm.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov teaches that the whole world is a very narrow bridge, but the main thing is not to make oneself afraid at all. We each experience scares in life and often live with much fear and anxiety. It is within our reach to transfer those negative feelings to a place of faith and recognition of Hashem's sovereignty. When we live with the constant recognition that Hashem is in charge, and that whatever He does is for our best, we are able to elevate our fears and transform them into a positive life of purpose and meaning.

Reb Yitzchak Breiter writes: Know and understand that everything that happens to us, both spiritually and materially – including what we ourselves do, whether deliberately or unwittingly, willfully or under duress – all comes about through the decree of Hashem. Even if you want to accomplish something holy, if you are not yet sufficiently worthy and have not sanctified yourself enough to achieve it, Heaven arranges things in such a way that you get distracted from it. Some idea gets implanted in your mind that prevents you from carrying out the holy deed, even if you want to. This is not because Hashem wants to take revenge, but because of His love.

Rav Alexander Zusia Friedman would say that the Torah tells us that Moshe and Aaron were born like any other mortals, to normal human parents. They became prophets and leaders of the Jewish People due to their own actions and choices, not because they descended from on high like celestial angels. From this we learn that every individual, through his own effort and free will, can reach even the highest spiritual levels – even as lofty as Moshe and Aaron.

Rav Shlomo Wolbe teaches that the praise of Moshe and Aaron fulfilling their missions and staying steadfast in their righteousness for their entire lives is, in reality, the goal of every Jew. We must aim to make it through life in general, and through each day in particular, without being derailed from our purpose in this world. No one can know where life will take them.

Rav Moshe Feinstein in Darash Moshe (Shemos 6:26-27) gives two reasons why Aaron is described as equal to Moshe. One, his participation was indispensable to Moshe's success. And two, he achieved the absolute maximum of his potential, just as Moshe did. In Hashem's scales, achievement is measured by how well one fulfills one's personal mission.

Rabbi David Ashear writes in his Living Emunah email ([#1293](#)) that everybody has a different purpose in life. And Hashem, who knows each person's purpose, deals with that person accordingly. Hashem made each person the exact way he needs to be to do his job. If it would be any other way, he wouldn't be able to accomplish what he needs to accomplish. Everybody has a different purpose; Hashem doesn't expect the same service from different people. Everyone can excel in the areas that Hashem enabled them to excel in.

A man named Shmuel, told the following story about himself. He said, It all started out almost 20 years ago when I was 10 years old. I was a very jumpy kid – I literally couldn't sit still for

more than a few minutes at a time. My Rabbi in school was very understanding and would always give me jobs to do to keep me active. One day the principal came in and told us my Rabbi was very sick and we would be having a substitute for a while. Rabbi Substitute had no tolerance for me. I was sent to the principal practically every day and the Rabbi called an urgent meeting with my parents, telling them my problems. My father stuck up for my saying, 'Our Shmuli has other fine qualities. Maybe his head is less at work, but he has amazing hands.'

But Rabbi Substitute wouldn't hear it. He said to me, 'If you don't start using your head, you'll amount to nothing in life. You hear me? NOTHING!' He yelled.

I was so hurt. I tried to change, but I couldn't. Eventually, my Rabbi came back and he was able to heal my wounds. I grew up, got married, started a family and I got by with the way Hashem made me. I volunteered for Hatzalah, to make use of my extra time wisely.

I'll never forget the day we received notice from the dispatcher in the middle of the night that an older man collapsed and wasn't breathing. I raced to the scene; it was my first real call. I was the first one to arrive, and I worked on him with all my might. The paramedics came, other Hatzalah members came, they tried to help, but there was no response and everyone there gave up. I, on the other hand, kept going. Everybody told me, 'It's over, Shmuli.' But I didn't listen; I just kept trying to save him.

And then, all of a sudden, I felt a pulse, and I screamed, 'I got a pulse!' They brought him to the hospital and, Baruch Hashem, he lived.

I received a phone call a month later from his grandson telling me how well his grandfather is doing and that they wanted to invite me to be the guest of honor at the *Seudat Hoda'a* they were making. I was so proud of what I did, and I was so excited to attend. When I arrived, I couldn't believe my eyes. The man I saved was none other than Rabbi Substitute from 20 years before. He hugged and kissed me, but he didn't recognize me. Then I told him who I was and he was in shock. When he got up to speak, he told everybody the story of how he said I would never amount to anything. He then turned to me with tears in his eyes and apologized in public. And then he said, 'Twenty years ago I told you that you don't use your head; yet what saved my life was precisely the fact that you did not follow your head, but your heart. Years ago I thought that you had a problem and you weren't thinking enough, now I know what you have is actually a huge heart.' And he came over to me to hug me and I returned the hug.

Everyone has a different mission. Hashem leads each person in the path he is meant to take.

Imagine living a life of being steadfast in maintaining your mission and not being derailed by the challenging environments in which you find yourself. How would that feel?

Can you take one minute each day to think about what your mission is and how to further it?

Shabbat Shalom and wishing you a week ahead of pursuing your mission with enthusiasm.