



לקוטי שיחות  
PROJECT  
LIKKUTEI  
SICHOS

## Sicha Summary

Chelek 16 | Vaera | Sichah 2

### The Verse:

This is Aharon and Moshe to whom G-d said: “Take the children of Israel out of Egypt.... They are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to take the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; this is Moshe and Aharon.” (*Shemos* 6:26-27)

### The Rashi:

*This is Aharon and Moshe* — Those who were mentioned above (in verse 20) whom Yocheved bore to Amram.

*This is Aharon and Moshe to whom G-d said* — There are places where the Torah mentions Aharon before Moshe, and there are places where it mentions Moshe before Aharon, to teach that they are equal, as one. (*Bereishis Rabbah*)

### The Questions:

The *Midrash* that serves as Rashi’s source says this somewhat differently: “**In every place**, the Torah mentions Moshe before Aharon; in **one place** it mentions Aharon first.”

Rashi’s claim that Aharon is given precedence several times (“there are places”) is indeed true; there are four instances (including this verse) where Aharon is placed before Moshe. But in the other verses aside from this one, the Torah mentions them in the context of their birth. Therefore, it is obvious that Aharon, the older brother, would be placed first. Those instances cannot be used to infer that Moshe and Aharon “are equal” because there is nothing unusual about placing Aharon first when discussing his birth.

What motivates Rashi to say that “there are places” is that a single exception from a standard formulation is not significant enough to support a novel interpretation that recasts every mention of Moshe and Aharon in a new light (that they are really equal). But just because Rashi requires there to be more than one deviation does not mean that he can will those instances into existence!

- 1) This being the case, why does Rashi say, “there are places...,” when there is really only one instance — this verse — where Aharon’s precedence is noteworthy?
- 2) Rashi begins his commentary on this verse by saying: “*This is Aharon and Moshe* — Those who were mentioned above (verse 20) whom Yocheved bore to Amram.” Why was it necessary for Rashi to tell us who Aharon and Moshe’s parents were? And more importantly, this implies that this verse mentions Moshe and Aharon in the context of their birth. If so, this verse, too, rightly mentioned Aharon first and cannot be used to infer anything about their relative importance.
- 3) In another deviation from his source material, Rashi says, “they are equal, as one,” while the *Midrash* says, “they are of equal significance.”
- 4) How is it actually possible to say that Moshe and Aharon were equal? Every child knows that Moshe was incomparably greater than all other Jewish leaders in history.

### **The Preface to the Explanation:**

The sequence of this segment of Chapter 6 is as follows:

G-d commands Moshe and Aharon to confront Pharaoh and redeem the Jewish people (v. 13). Then, the Torah details Moshe’s and Aharon’s lineage. But once digressing to discuss the genealogy of the tribe of Levi, the third son of Jacob, the Torah broadens its discussion to include the

genealogy of both older brothers, the tribes of Reuven and Shimon (v. 14-19). Amram's marriage to Yocheved and the birth of Moshe and Aharon is then recorded (v. 20), followed by the remaining genealogy of Levi's children (v. 21-25).

Our two verses (26-27) reintroduce Moshe and Aharon. Then, in verse 29, the Torah returns to G-d's communication to Moshe and Aharon, "And G-d spoke to Moshe saying...."

Rashi was bothered by the seemingly superfluous inclusion of these two verses. Why do we need to be reminded that "This is Aharon and Moshe to whom G-d said: "Take the children of Israel out of Egypt.... They are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to take the Children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; this is Moshe and Aharon"?

We know all this information already. The Torah should have just continued with G-d's communication?!

### **The Explanation:**

This led Rashi to understand the reintroduction of Moshe and Aharon in our verse as being linked to the earlier discussion of their lineage: "*This is Aharon and Moshe* — whom Yocheved bore to Amram." The reason why these particular people deserved to be G-d's agents of redemption was because of the merit of their parents.

We previously learned that Yocheved, a midwife, stood up to Pharaoh and refused to follow his decree to kill Jewish children; she even heroically sustained the children. And when Pharaoh commanded his army to drown every Jewish boy in the Nile, causing Jewish couples to voluntarily divorce to refrain from having children, Amram boldly set an example by remarrying Yocheved and fathering a child in the face of this decree.

Thus: "This is Moshe and Aharon" — these were children of heroic Yocheved and Amram, and that is why G-d chose them to "take the children of Israel out of Egypt."

The question becomes: Amram's and Yocheved's heroism was only displayed in the narrative of Moshe's birth. Aharon was born before his parent's remarriage, and Yocheved's most heroic intervention was in hiding Moshe in a basket. Moshe was also the central agent in bringing about G-d's redemption of the Jews. In this verse which ascribes the brothers' role to their parent's virtue, Moshe should have been mentioned first as he was the one born directly as a result of that virtue.

The same logic applies to the earlier verse which describes Moshe's and Aharon's birth, "Yocheved... bore {for} him Aharon and Moshe." (*Shemos* 6:20) If the point of naming the parents was to justify their children's roles as redeemers, then of greater significance is the prominence of the child, not their birth order. And since Moshe was the main leader and the one born directly as a consequence of his parent's virtue, he should have been mentioned first.

Thus, there are two verses where we expect Moshe to appear first yet he does not. This led Rashi to the conclusion that "they are equal, as one," not, as the *Midrash* says, "of equal significance," because this is not apparent from a plain reading of the Torah. But rather, "equal, as one" in the sense that they were both equally part of the same mission — redeeming the Jews from Egypt.

### **A Deeper Look:**

Chassidus explains that Moshe corresponds to the Divine name of *Havaya* — G-d's essential name alluding to His transcendence — and Aharon corresponds to the Divine name *Elokim* — which refers to G-d as He is present within Creation. The fact that the Torah sometimes says, "Moshe and Aharon," and sometimes says, "Aharon and Moshe," alludes to the unity between these two realities. G-d as Creator and as beyond Creation are one Divine reality.

But this awareness can develop in two ways: 1) *This is Aharon and Moshe to whom G-d said...* — there is a Divine revelation initiated by G-d ("to

whom G-d said”) that reveals the unity between Creation and G-d. 2) *They are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh... this is Moshe and Aharon* — humanity itself refines its perception of reality (“spoke to Pharaoh”) until it understands that Creation and G-d are truly one.

When this awareness is developed within Creation itself, it has lasting permanence, as Rashi concludes his comments to verse 27:

*“This is Moshe and Aharon — they remained steadfast in their mission and righteousness from beginning to end.”*