YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE RASHEI HA-YESHIVA**

The htm version of this shiur is available at:

<http://vbm-torah.org/archive/sichot72/14-72vaera.htm>

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# Dedicated in memory of Florence Lipstein, whose yahrzeit is 25 Tevet by Sidney and Cheryl Lipstein

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# PARASHAT VAERA

# SICHA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL ZT"L

**Portrait of a Leader**

Translated by Kaeren Fish

At the end of last week's *parasha*, Moshe experienced a severe setback: his mission to Pharaoh had failed, resulting in a worsening of conditions for Bnei Yisrael. They respond bitterly: "May God look upon you [Moshe and Aharon] and judge, for you have made us odious in the eyes of Pharaoh…" (*Shemot* 5:21). They claim that Moshe and Aharon are false prophets, or that they misunderstood what God had told them, and that they will be punished for the new suffering which they have caused.

At the beginning of our *parasha*, God reassures Moshe and promises him redemption – but when Moshe seeks to pass this on to the people, they are deaf to his message, "for impatience of spirit and for hard labor" (*Shemot* 6:9).

This is immediately followed by a verse which looks like a re-appointment of Moshe, and – once again – a replay of the argument about his suitability for this role:

God spoke to Moshe, saying: Come, speak to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, that he might let the children of Israel out of his land.

And Moshe spoke before God, saying: Behold, Bnei Yisrael did not listen to me; how then will Pharaoh listen to me, when I am heavy of speech? (*Shemot* 6:10-12)

This is followed by a genealogical tree of Moshe's family, as though we are encountering him for the first time.

Our impression is therefore that this is a new mission, not a continuation of the previous one. Indeed, Ramban writes (5:22) that perhaps some time elapsed between Moshe's failure in his first encounter with Pharaoh, and his return to Egypt. He cites the possibility, raised in the midrash, that in the interim Moshe returned with his family to Midian, and remained there for six months, until God appeared to him and commanded him to go again to Egypt.

In the verses describing his new mission, we read:

God spoke to Moshe and to Aharon, and He commanded them (*va-yetzavem*) to Bnei Yisrael and to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. (*Shemot* 6:13)

Rashi gives a mild hint at the intention here:

"He commanded them to Bnei Yisrael" – He commanded them to lead them peaceably and tolerantly.

But the midrash formulates the situation in much more forthright terms:

God said to him: "My children are recalcitrant, they are hot-headed, they are troublesome. Therefore, accept in advance that they will curse you and stone you." (*Shemot Rabba* 7:3)

A difficult job awaits the leader of Bnei Yisrael. He is going to have to deal with troublesome, recalcitrant people who will constantly be arriving at his doorstep with complaints – and, moreover, will even act violently towards him.

Further on, the midrash shows how the leader might deal with this challenge:

"Who is the King of glory?" (*Tehillim* 24:10) – Why is God referred to here as the "King of glory"? Because He shares glory with those who fear Him. How is this so? In the case of a human king, no one else rides his horse, and no one is permitted to sit on his throne. But God seated Shlomo upon His throne… and led Eliyahu upon His horse… In the case of a human king, no one may use his sceptre. But God gave over His staff to Moshe… In the case of a human king, no one else wears his crown. But in the future, God will place His crown upon [the head of] King Mashiach. (*Shemot Rabba* 8:1)

God is called the "King of glory" not because glory is shown to Him, but rather because He gives glory to those who fear Him. A leader must know that his job is to give to his subjects, not to receive from them. Only in this way will he achieve the desired attitude on their part, and be able to influence them. A leader who believes that the people must give him honor, rather than the other way around, will find himself in conflict with the people and on the receiving end of their abuse.