

## **Moshe's Perspective** **Rabbi Maury Grebenau**

Late in this week's parsha, Moshe tries to sum up our mission in life. In one sentence he tells us what it is that Hashem asks of us. It is a laundry list of fear, respect, love etc. for Hashem and to follow all of G-d's many commandments. What the Talmud (Brachos 33b) questions is Moshe's introduction. The pasuk seems to downplay the difficulty of fulfilling our role. "What does Hashem ask of you? Only to ... (Devarim 10:12)" is the way Moshe begins his remarks. The Talmud asks that fear of Heaven is not something to be downplayed. Is it so easy to achieve? The Talmud answers that for Moshe it was indeed a small thing. The comparison is made to a person who is asked to produce an expensive utensil; it is not a difficult task if they own such an item.

The first time I came across this Gemara I was very bothered. It seems to fly in the face of everything we know about Moshe. Moshe was the leader par excellence of the Jewish people. A constant advocate for the Jews, Moshe understood where they were and met them there time and time again. How could he be so out of touch with the people? Could he suggest that fear of Heaven is a simple thing simply because he had attained this level himself?

The Maharsha quickly came to my rescue with his beautiful read of the Gemara. He explains that we are misunderstanding the Gemara's answer. The Gemara is not saying that it was easy for Moshe to fear Hashem so he expected the Jews to have the same strength of character. Instead, the Gemara is saying that the Jews had an awe of Moshe. When Moshe came down from Har Sinai with his face aglow from his encounter with the divine, it was easy to be in awe of his visage. Moshe, the consummate educator that he was, showed the people that the difficult goal of awe of Hashem had already been achieved. Moshe told the people that if they could so easily have awe of a simple human being, shouldn't it be easy to be in awe of Hashem.

The Maharsha further explains that this is the comparison the Gemara was making. Being in awe is difficult. It seems like a major undertaking, like asking someone to produce an expensive vessel. However, if a person already possesses the vessel then producing it is no great feat. The Jewish people were already in awe, all they had to do was redirect their awe. With the Maharsha's insight this Gemara comes into perfect consonance with what we know of Moshe's character.

The Torah is very skimpy on the details of Moshe's younger life. We are told of only a few incidents and are left to wonder why Moshe is chosen by Hashem to be the leader of the Jews. The Midrash fills in some of the gap by telling the story of Moshe the shepherd chasing after a sheep which has strayed from the herd. Moshe's strength as a leader was his concern for each individual person. This is a necessary quality in leadership. Here Moshe reveals a second vital quality. Moshe is able to see things from the people's perspective. He is, of course, on an extremely high spiritual level and yet he is able to give practical advice for those who are lower on the spiritual ladder. This is necessary in parenting, leadership and education in general. The advice offered must be

in sync with where the recipient is at that moment. Sometimes the packaging is almost as important as the product. The same lesson can be boring or fascinating, relevant or foreign, all depending on how it is relayed to the audience. The only way to package properly is to truly understand the people you are trying to reach. It was this quality which defined Moshe's leadership and this quality which made him the greatest leader we have ever known.