

## פרשת במדבר

Do you know the Halachos that this Mishnah teaches? It is at the end (Mishnah 11) of the second Perek of Masseches Bava Metzia and it reads:

אבדתו ואבדת אביו אבדתו קודמת אבדתו ואבדת רבו שלו קודמת אבדת אביו ואבדת רבו של רבו קודמת שאביו הביאו לעולם הזה ורבו שלמדו חכמה מביאו לחיי העולם הבא ואם אביו חכם של אביו קודמת היה אביו ורבו נושאים משאוי מניח את של רבו ואחר כך מניח את של אביו היה אביו ורבו בבית השבי פודה את רבו ואחר כך פודה את אביו ואם היה אביו חכם פודה את אביו ואחר כך פודה את רבו:

[When only one can be retrieved] of the lost article of a person and of his father, his lost article takes precedence. His lost article and that of his Rav, his takes precedence. That of his father and that of his Rav – that of his Rav takes precedence because his father brings him into this world and his Rav who taught him wisdom brings him into *Olom HaBo*. But if his father was a *chacham*, then that of his father takes precedence.

If both his father and his Rav need help to take the heavy load from upon them, he first lowers the load of his Rav and afterwards he lowers the load of his father.

[When he cannot redeem both] his father and his Rav who are being held in captivity, he redeems his Rav first and then his father. If his father was a *chacham*, he redeems his father first.

Rambam, in his commentary on this Mishnah, explains:

דע שאפילו לא פירש לו אלא מלה במשנה הרי הוא נקרא רבו, אבל אינו חייב להעדיפו על אביו בכל מה שהזכיר באבדה ובשבירה ולפרוק אלא אם היה רבו מובהק, והוא שתהיה רוב חכמתו ממנו. והרמז שהאדם עצמו קודם לזולתו יהיה מי שיהיה אמרו יתעלה בממון (דברים טו/ט) <sup>1</sup>אפס כי לא יהיה בך אביון כאלו אמר שאין אתה חייב לסלק נזק מזולתך אלא בתנאי שלא יחול בך כאותו הנזק שסלקת ממנו, לפי אם היית

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<sup>1</sup> The entire verse reads:

אִפְסֹ כִּי לֹא יִהְיֶה בְּךָ אֲבִיוֹן כִּי בִרְךָ יְבָרְכֶךָ ה' בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ נָתַן לָךְ נַחֲלָה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ:  
Certainly there will not be in you an impoverished person because Hashem will surely bless you in the land that Hashem your G-d gives you as an inheritance for a legacy.

במצב שאם תתן לאביון די מחסורו תחזור אתה להיות אביון אינך חייב ליתן לו, והוא אמרם שלך קודם לשל כל אדם:

Know, that even if a person only explained a single word from a Mishnah that he is called 'his Rav'<sup>2</sup>. But in such an instance he has no obligation to give him preference over his father in any of the matters that it says in the Mishnah: lost articles, captivity and to undo a heavy load. That is only if he is his *Rav muvhak*-the person from whom he learned the majority of his wisdom.

The hint that a person himself has preference over all others [in the above areas] is what Chazal said in terms of a person's finances in regards to the verse, 'certainly there will not be in you an impoverished person'. They said that this teaches that you don't have to remove monetary harm from others if you will suffer that harm yourself. That is, if you would be in a situation where you would give the poor person what he needed and then you would become impoverished, you are not obligated to give to him. And that is what Chazal said, 'Yours comes before that of anyone else'<sup>3</sup>.

*Tiferes Yisroel* on the Mishnah there adds, based on Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah Siman 242:

רבו. ודוקא ברבו מובהק, שרוב חכמתו ממנו, מיהו בשילם אביו או אחר שכר לימודו, הן קודמין לרבו:

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<sup>2</sup> We learn in the Braisa of Perek *Kinyan Torah* which is printed as the sixth Perek of Masseches Ovos (Braisa 3):

הלומד מחבירו פרק אחד או הלכה אחת או פסוק אחד או דבור אחד אפילו אות אחת צריך לנהוג בו כבוד שכן מצינו בדוד מלך ישראל שלא למד מאחיתופל אלא שני דברים בלבד וקראו רבו אלופו ומיודעו...

One who learns from someone else one chapter or one Halachah or one verse or one word, or even one letter – you must treat him with respect because we found that Dovid King of Israel only learned two things from Achitofel –and he called him his 'rav', his 'teacher' the 'one who gave him knowledge'.

<sup>3</sup> We read in Masseches Bava Metzia there (33 a):

לא יהיה בך - אמר רב יהודה אמר רב, אפס כי לא יהיה בך אביון, שלך קודם לשל כל אדם:  
*There will not be in you* – Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav: certainly there will not be in you an impoverished person – yours come before any other person.

*His Rav* – this only refers to his *Rav Muvhak* from whom he received the majority of his wisdom.

However, if his father or someone else paid the Rav for the learning, the one who pays has precedence.

Bringing a person to ‘this world’ means that one gives him life in this world. Bringing a person to the ‘next world’ means that by teaching him Torah and proper behavior in Mitzvos and *middos*, he will merit eternal life.

Bringing a person to ‘this world’ commands respect. Bringing a person to the ‘next world’ commands even more respect.

And, one who brings a person to both worlds is deserving of the highest level of respect.

With this in mind, let us look at a set of P’sukim in our Parsha.

We read (B’midbar Perek 3/P’sukim 1-4):

וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת אַהֲרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה בַּיּוֹם דִּבֶּר ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי: וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן  
הַבְּכֹר נֹדָב וְאַבְיָהוּא אֶלְעָזָר וְאִיתָמָר: אֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֲנִים הַמְשֻׁחִים אֲשֶׁר  
מָלֵא יָדָם לְכַהֵן: וַיָּמָת נֹדָב וְאַבְיָהוּא לִפְנֵי ה' בְּהִקְרַבָם אֲשֶׁר זָרָה לִפְנֵי ה' בְּמַדְבַּר סִינַי  
וּבָנִים לֹא הָיוּ לָהֶם וַיְכַהֵן אֶלְעָזָר וְאִיתָמָר עַל פְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן אֲבִיהֶם:

These are the generations of Aharon and Moshe on the day that Hashem spoke with Moshe on Mt. Sinai. These are the names of the sons of Aharon: Nodov, Avihu, Elazar and I’somor. These are the names of the sons of Aharon, the anointed Kohanim that he consecrated their hand for the service. Nodov and Avihu died before Hashem when they offered a foreign fire before Hashem in the Sinai Wilderness and they did not have children; Elazar and I’somor served as Kohanim before Aharon their father.

The absence of the mentioning of Moshe’s biological children is striking. One might think that since the Torah already identified Moshe’s two sons in Parshas Yisro there was no need to mention them again. We read there (Sh’mos Perek 18/P’sukim 2-4):

וַיִּקַּח יִתְרוֹ חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה אֶת צִפּוֹרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ אַחַר שְׁלוּחֶיהָ: וְאֵת שְׁנֵי בָנֶיהָ אֲשֶׁר שָׂם  
הָאֱתָד גֵּרְשָׁם כִּי אָמַר גֵּר הָיִיתִי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם: וְשֵׁם הָאֱתָד אֶלְיָעֶזֶר כִּי אָ... לְקִי אָבִי  
בְּעֶזְרִי וַיִּצְלַנִי מִחַרְבַּת פְּרַעֲהָ:

Yisro the father-in-law of Moshe took Tzipporah the wife of Moshe after he sent her. And her two sons; the name of one was *Gershom* because Moshe said, 'I was a stranger in a foreign land'. And the name of the one was *Eliezer* because the G-d of my father was in my aid and He saved me from the sword of Par'o.

However, that cannot be the reason for their names to be omitted because Aharon's sons were also mentioned earlier. We read in Parshas Vo'eiro (ibid. Perek 6/Posuk 23):

וַיִּקַּח אַהֲרֹן אֶת אֵלִישֶׁבַע בַּת עַמִּינַדָב אַחֹת נַחֲשֹׁן לֹו לְאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד לֹו אֶת נֹדֵב וְאֶת  
אֲבִיהוּא אֶת אֶלְעָזָר וְאֶת אִיתָמָר:

Aharon took Elisheva bas Aminadav, the sister of Nachshon, for a wife and she bore him Nodov, Avihu, Elazar and I'somor.

Thus, we must question why the 'generations of Moshe' is written in our Parsha and we find only the generations of Aharon listed by name.

Rashi writes in our Parsha:

ואלה תולדת אהרן ומשה - ואינו מזכיר אלא בני אהרן. ונקראו תולדות משה, לפי שלמדן תורה. מלמד שכל המלמד את בן חבירו תורה, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו ילדו:

*These are the generations of Aharon and Moshe* – The Torah only mentions the sons of Aharon and yet they are called 'the generations of Moshe'? The reason that they are called 'the generations of Moshe' is that anyone who teaches someone else's child Torah is considered as if he gave birth to him.

ביום דבר ה' את משה - נעשו אלו התולדות שלו, שלמדן מה שלמד מפי הגבורה:

*On the day that Hashem spoke to Moshe* – Then they became Moshe's generations since he taught them what he learned from G-d.

Of course, this explains why the children of Aharon are named as Moshe's children but it does not explain why the children of Moshe are not listed.

The answer, though, seems apparent. Since the Torah has already taught us the identities of the biological children of both Aharon and Moshe, the repetition here was not intended to reintroduce them to us. Rather, the repetition here was to teach us that Aharon's children were also called the children of Moshe.

Moshe's biological children were his children in any case and therefore it was not necessary to write their names<sup>4</sup>.

Let us go back to Rashi's explanation as to why the children of Aharon are called the generations of Moshe<sup>5</sup>.

He explained that since Moshe taught them Torah he was also their father, spiritually.

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<sup>4</sup> However, see Rashi to Sh'mos Perek 34/Posuk 32 where we read:

תנו רבנן כיצד סדר המשנה, משה היה לומד מפי הגבורה, נכנס אהרן, שנה לו משה פרקו, נסתלק אהרן וישב לו לשמאל משה, נכנסו בניו, שנה להם משה פרקם, נסתלקו הם, ישב אלעזר לימין משה ואיתמר לשמאל אהרן, נכנסו זקנים, שנה להם משה פרקם, נסתלקו זקנים ישבו לצדדין, נכנסו כל העם שנה להם משה פרקם, נמצא ביד כל העם אחד, ביד הזקנים שנים, ביד בני אהרן שלשה, ביד אהרן ארבעה וכו' כדאיתא בעירובין (נד ב):

The Braisa taught: What was the order of learning? Moshe learned from the mouth of the Almighty. Aharon entered and Moshe taught him his section. Aharon went up and sat to Moshe's left. Aharon's children entered and Moshe taught them their section. They went up and Elazar sat to Moshe's right and I'somor to Aharon's left.

The elders entered and Moshe taught them their section. The elders went up and sat at the side.

All the people entered and Moshe taught them their section.

The result is that all the people learned once, the elders twice, the sons of Aharon three times and Aharon four times as it is written in Masseches Eruvin.

We note that Moshe's sons are not mentioned there as well.

[Assuming that Moshe taught the people immediately after he descended from Sinai on Yom HaKippurim, we also need to question the absence of Nodov and Avihu from this Braisa. Moshe descended on the Yom HaKippurim-the tenth of Tishrei and Nodov and Avihu died months later on the first of Nissan. See a suggested solution later on.]

<sup>5</sup> *Oznaim L'Torah* here gives an explanation based on a Midrash that tells us a little but leaves much unsaid.

The Midrash (B'midbar Rabba Parshata 2/22) writes:

אלה תולדות אהרן ומשה והרי תולדותיו של משה לא נתבעו כאן ולמה נאמר תולדות אהרן ומשה בשביל כבודו של משה שלא למעט את כבודו:

*These are the generations of Aharon and Moshe* – But the generations of Moshe were not demanded to have been written here. Why does it say 'the generations

However, if that was the reason for their attribution to Moshe, then all of Israel should be attributed to Moshe in the same way.

Moshe Rabbenu!

Moshe *our* Rav, *our* Teacher.

If teaching Torah confers parenthood, Moshe is the father of us all. But, he is not called *Moshe Ovinu* but Moshe Rabbenu!

Chasam Sofer (Al HaTorah d.h. *v'eileh* 5560) suggests that this parenthood that is ascribed to Moshe Rabbenu is unique for the sons of Aharon for reasons that do not apply to the rest of Israel.

It is true that Moshe taught Torah to all of Israel. However his relationship with Aharon's children was unique.

What was that uniqueness?

We read in Parshas Eikev (D'vorim Perek 9/Posuk 20) regarding the sin of the *Eigel*:

וּבִאֵהָרֶן הַתְּאֲנֹף ה' מְאֹד לְהַשְׁמִידוֹ וְאֶתְפַּלֵּל גַּם בְּעַד אֶהָרֶן בְּעֵת הַהוּא:

Hashem was very angry against<sup>6</sup> Aharon, to destroy him; I [Moshe] prayed also<sup>7</sup> for Aharon at that time.

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of Aharon *and* Moshe'? Because of Moshe's honor, in order not to lower his *kavod*.

What issue could have there been to say that Moshe's was being degraded?

*Oznaim L'Torah* explains that the absence of Moshe's biological/natural children from this list may have suggested that Moshe was inadequate as a father. Therefore the Torah relates Aharon's children to him in order to insure that Moshe's honor is not assailed.

<sup>6</sup> We translated the word *וּבִאֵהָרֶן* as 'against' Aharon. That is certainly correct.

At the same time we can ascribe a second rendition that will shed light on the events that occurred.

The word *וּבִאֵהָרֶן* can all be translated literally as 'in' Aharon. What would such a translation indicate?

Rashi writes there:

ובאהרן התאנף ה' - לפי ששמע לכם:

*Hashem was angry at Aharon* – Because he listened to you [Israel to make the *Eigel*].

להשמידו - זה כלוי בנים. וכן הוא אומר (עמוס ב/ט<sup>8</sup>) ואשמיד פרוי ממעל:

*To destroy him* – This refers to the killing of all of his children. And so it is written, 'I will destroy his fruit from above'.

ואתפלל גם בעד אהרן - והועילה תפילתי לכפר מחצה ומתו שנים ונשאר השנים:

*And I prayed also for Aharon* – My prayer was effective to bring one-half of the atonement and two sons died and two remained.

Thus, Chasam Sofer explains, Moshe not only taught Torah to Aharon's children, and was their father in that sense, but he also was almost like a biological father to them because he preserved the lives of two of them – *Elazar* and *I'somor*<sup>9</sup> through his prayers.

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We read in Parshas Vayero (B'reishis Perek 22/Posuk 12) regarding the demand of Sarah I'meinu that Yishmael be banished from the household of Avraham and Sarah:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל אַבְרָהָם אַל יָרַע בְּעֵינֶיךָ עַל הַנֶּעֱרָר וְעַל אֲמִתְךָ כֹּל אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר אֵלַיךְ שָׂרָה שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלָהּ כִּי בְיִצְחָק יִקְרָא לָךְ זָרַע:

G-d said to Avraham, 'It should not be bad in your eyes regarding the lad and your maidservant; all that Sarah says to you – you should listen to her voice because through Yitzchak it will be called your seed.'

We translated ביצחק as 'through Yitzchak' and that is absolutely correct.

However, ביצחק could also translated as 'in Yitzchak' and with that translation we can understand Rashi in Parshas Vayetze. We read there (B'reishis Perek 28/Posuk 15) about Hashem's promise to Yaakov Ovinu at the time of the vision of the *sulam*:

וְהָיָה אֲנִי עִמָּךְ וְשָׁמַרְתִּיךָ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ וְהִשְׁבַּתִּיךָ אֶל הָאָדָמָה הַזֹּאת כִּי לֹא אֶעְזָבְךָ עַד אֲשֶׁר אִם עָשִׂיתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי לָךְ:

Behold I am with you and I will guard you wherever you go and I will return you to this ground because I will not forsake you until I have done that which I spoke to you.

However, this explanation of Chasam Sofer seems incomplete. Moshe Rabbenu only saved the lives of two of the sons, not all four. Thus, he could be considered to be the ‘father’ of the two who were saved but not of *Nodov* and *Avihu* who perished.

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Rashi writes there:

דברתי לך - לצרכך ועליך, מה שהבטחתי לאברהם על זרעו, לך הבטחתי ולא לעשו, שלא אמרתי לו כי יצחק יקרא לך זרע, אלא כי ביצחק, ולא כל יצחק.

*I spoke to you* – For your needs and regarding you. [What is this referring to?] That which I promised Avraham regarding his seed - I promised him for you and not for Eisav. I did not say ‘because Yitzchak will be called seed for you’. Rather I said, ‘*In* Yitzchak – but not all of Yitzchak.

We can thus interpret the words:

ובאהרן התאנף

*In* Aharon Hashem was angry...

‘in Aharon and not all of Aharon - some of his sons died, but not all of them.

<sup>7</sup> Moshe prayed for Israel who sinned by worshipping the *Eigel* in order that Hashem should not destroy them.

Although, of course, Aharon did not worship the *Eigel*, he still required saving due to his central role in its construction.

<sup>8</sup> The entire verse reads:

וְאֶנְכִי הַשְׁמַדְתִּי אֶת הָאֱמֹרִי מִפְּנֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר כְּגִבְהַ אֲרָזִים גְּבֹהוּ וְחֹסֵן הוּא כְּאֵלוֹנִים וְאֲשַׁמֵּיד פְּרִיָו מִמַּעַל וְשָׁרְשָׁיו מִתַּחַת:

I Hashem destroyed the Emorites from before Israel; they were tall like the cedar trees and strong like the oak trees; I destroyed its fruit from above and its roots from below.

Metzudos Dovid writes:

ואשמיד וגו' – רצונו לומר השמדתו בתכלית ולפי שהמשילו לאילן אמר לשון הנופל בהשחתת עץ פרי שמשירים הפירות ועוקרים השרשים:

This means to say: I destroyed it completely. Since the verse uses the parable of a tree, its expressions are appropriate for a tree – destroying its fruit – the tree sheds its fruit [before being edible] and uproots its roots.

Although Rashi does not write this explanation in Sefer Amos, it seems to be clear from what he writes here that he concurs with this explanation of the Metzudos.

The ‘roots’ refer to the elders of the past and the ‘fruit from above’ refers to the children that will be born from them in the future.



Upon second thought, however, Chasam Sofer is justified. Moshe prayed for all of the sons to live. He sought life for all four of the children of Aharon HaKohen. He did not know if his prayers would be effective or not. And he certainly did not know if his prayers would be completely effective or partially so.

In fact, when we read Moshe's words of consolation to his brother Aharon immediately following the death of the two sons we understand the limits of Moshe's knowledge in this instance.

We read (Vayikro Perek 10/Posuk 3):

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל אֶהֱרֹן הוּא אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' לֵאמֹר בְּקִרְבִי אֶקְדָּשׁ וְעַל פְּנֵי כָל הָעָם אֶכְבֹּד  
וַיִּדְם אֶהֱרֹן:

Moshe said to Aharon, 'This is what Hashem spoke "With those who are close to me I Hashem will be sanctified and My Glory will be felt upon the entire people"; Aharon was silent.

Rashi writes:

הוא אשר דבר וגו' -...אמר לו משה לאהרן אהרן אחי יודע הייתי שיתקדש הבית במיודעיו של מקום והייתי סבור או בי או ברך, עכשיו רואה אני שהם גדולים ממני וממך:

*This is what Hashem spoke* – Moshe said to Aharon, 'Aharon, my brother, I knew that this House [the Mishkan] would be sanctified by those were best known by Hashem and I thought that it would be me or you. I see now that they (Nodov and Avihu) are greater than me and you.

Thus, Moshe did not know who would die and who would not die. Perhaps it would have been Aharon and perhaps it would have been Moshe<sup>10</sup>. So he certainly did not pray for any of the sons in particular and thus Moshe Rabbenu strove to give life to all of them.

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<sup>9</sup> Or Hachaim HaKodosh writes a similar explanation.

<sup>10</sup> It is worthwhile to note that we do not have a record of Moshe davening for himself – even though he thought that he was a likely victim.

The sons of Aharon are called ‘the generations of Moshe’ because Moshe had a two-fold relationship with them. He sought to preserve their lives in this world, that they should not die prematurely, and to bring them to Olom HaBo by the virtue of the Torah that he taught them.

However, this answer seems incomplete as well.

Didn’t we learn at the time of the *Eigel* that when Hashem wanted to destroy Israel that Moshe prayed for their survival? We read in Parshas Ki Siso (Sh’mos Perek 32/P’sukim 30-32):

וַיְהִי מִמָּחָרֶת וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל הָעָם אַתֶּם חָטֵאתֶם חֲטֵאתֶם חֲטֵאתֶם גְּדֹלָה וְעַתָּה אֶעֱלֶה אֶל ה' אֹלֵי אֲכַפְרֶה בְּעַד חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם: וַיֵּשֶׁב מֹשֶׁה אֶל ה' וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי חָטָא הָעָם הַזֶּה חֲטֵאתָ גְדֹלָה וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם אֱלֹהִי זָהָב: וְעַתָּה אִם תִּשָּׂא חַטֹּאתֶם וְאִם אֵין מַחְנִי נָא מִסִּפְרֵךְ אֲשֶׁר כָּתַבְתָּ:

And it was on the morrow that Moshe said to the people, ‘You have sinned a great sin and now I will ascend to Hashem, perhaps I will be able to atone for your sin.’ Moshe returned to Hashem and he said, ‘Please. This people have sinned a great sin and they made a god of gold. And now, if You will forgive their sin; if not, erase me, please from Your Book that You have written.’

Thus, not only did Moshe teach Torah to all of Israel – he preserved their lives. Surely, then, he was like a biological father and not only a spiritual one. He had a two-fold relationship with all of Israel. Why then were not all of Israel counted as his children as well?

However, I learned from Chasam Sofer (Al HaTorah 5568 d.h. *v'eileh*<sup>11</sup>) to attend to the precise language of our verse. The Torah writes:

וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת אַהֲרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה בְּיוֹם דִּבֶּר ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי:

These are the generations of Aharon and Moshe *on the day that Hashem spoke with Moshe on Mt. Sinai.*

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<sup>11</sup> See his *Halachic/Hashkafic* ‘pilpul’ there.

The Torah specifically assigns those generations as being relevant at Sinai, presumably referring to *Mattan Torah*.

Already at that time Aharon's sons were in endangered and they required the prayers of Moshe Rabbenu.

We read at the end of Parshas Mishpotim regarding *Mattan Torah* (Sh'mos Perek 24/P'sukim 9-11):

וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן וְנֹדָב וְאַבִּיהוּא וְשִׁבְעִים מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וַתַּחַת רַגְלָיו כְּמַעֲשֵׂה לִבְנֵת הַסַּפִּיר וְכַעֲצֻם הַשָּׁמַיִם לְטֹהַר: וְאֵל אֶצִּילִי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא  
שָׁלַח יָדוֹ וַיַּחַזְזוּ אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים... לִקְיָם וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ:

Moshe ascended and Aharon and Nodov and Avihu and seventy from the elders of Israel. They saw the G-d of Israel and under His feet was something made like sapphire bricks with the purity of the very substance of heaven. Hashem did not send out His Hand to strike the nobles of B'nei Yisroel; they saw G-d and they ate and they drank.

Rashi writes:

ויראו את א...ל'קי ישראל - נסתכלו והציצו ונתחייבו מיתה, אלא שלא רצה הקדוש ברוך הוא לערבב שמחת התורה, והמתין לנדב ואביהוא עד יום חנוכת המשכן,

*They saw the G-d of Israel* – they stared and they peeked and deserved to die. But, G-d did not want to mix the happiness of receiving the Torah and He waited to kill Nodov and Avihu<sup>12</sup> until the day of the dedication of the Mishkan.

Thus, already at Sinai Moshe prayed for Aharon's children; his prayers for Israel were forty days later.

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<sup>12</sup> We note that the Torah writes about Nodov and Avihu ascending Mt. Sinai; it does not mention Elazar and I'somor.

Perhaps this is a support to the words of Moshe that Nodov and Avihu were particularly close to G-d.

Thus, at *Sinai*, at the time of *Mattan Torah*, Israel was not yet considered the 'biological' child of Moshe Rabbenu because *Mattan Torah* took place before Israel turned to worship the *Eigel*.

However, I think that we can suggest another reason for the unique connection that the Torah makes between Moshe Rabbenu and B'nei Aharon. It is a connection that belongs with all four of them and does not have a parallel with anyone else in Israel.

Of course all of Israel were the children of Moshe Rabbenu. He taught them Torah and we know that anyone who teaches Torah to another's child can consider them to be his or her child.

That idea is immanent in *Shema* where we read (D'vorim Perek 6/Posuk 7):

וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבָנֵיךָ וּדְבַרְתָּ בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִקְתְּךָ בְּדַרְךָ וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ:

You shall teach them [words of Torah] with acuity to your sons and you shall speak about them during your sitting in your house and in your going on the way and in your laying down and in your rising up.

Rashi writes:

לבניך - אלו התלמידים. מצינו בכל מקום שהתלמידים קרוים בנים, שנאמר (דברים יד/א<sup>13</sup>) בנים אתם לה' א...ל'קיקם, ואומר (מלכים ב ב/ג<sup>14</sup>) בני הנביאים אשר בבית אל, וכן בחזקיהו שלמד תורה לכל ישראל וקראם בנים שנאמר (דברי הימים ב

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<sup>13</sup> The entire verse reads:

בנים אתם לה' א...ל'קיקם לא תתגדדו ולא תשימו קרחה בין עיניכם למת:

You are *sons* for Hashem your G-d; do not cut yourselves and do not remove the hair from between your eyes in mourning for the dead.

<sup>14</sup> The entire verse reads:

וַיֵּצְאוּ בְנֵי הַנְּבִיאִים אֲשֶׁר בֵּית אֵל אֶל אֱלִישָׁע וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו הֲיָדַעַתָּ כִּי הַיּוֹם ה' לָקַח אֶת אֲדֹנָיִךָ מֵעַל רֹאשְׁךָ וַיֹּאמֶר גַּם אֲנִי יָדַעְתִּי הַחַשׁוּ:

The *sons* of the prophets who were in Beit El went out to Elisha and they said to him, 'Did you know that today Hashem is taking your master from above your head?' He said, 'Also I know, be quiet'.

כט/יא<sup>15</sup>) בני עתה אל תשלו. וכשם שהתלמידים קרוים בנים, שנאמר בנים אתם לה' א ... ל'קיכם, כך הרב קרוי אב, שנאמר (מלכים ב ב/יב<sup>16</sup>) אבי אבי רכב ישראל וגו':

*To your sons* – These are your students. We find everywhere that 'students' are called 'sons'. It says, "You are *sons* to Hashem your G-d'. It says, 'The *sons* of the prophets who were in Beit El. Also regarding Chizkiyahu who taught Torah to all of Israel and he called them 'sons' as it says, 'My sons, do not forget'.

Just like that 'students' are called 'sons' so is the *Rav* called 'father' as it says, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel'.

What then made Moshe's relationship as their teacher of Torah unique so that they are specifically called his *toldos*?

I think that the answer is that Moshe Rabbenu inaugurated B'nei Aharon to be Kohanim.

Moshe's role in bringing B'nei Aharon to act as Kohanim was a watershed moment. Of course it was HaKodosh Boruch Hu who appointed them but it was Moshe Rabbenu who instructed them and initiated them into the service.

In this way, *B'nei Aharon* were distinguished from the rest of Israel and this allows for them to be termed *תולדות משה*, the generations of Moshe, in a way that was not relevant for anyone else.

Or *almost* anyone else.

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<sup>15</sup> The entire verse reads:

בני עתה אל תשלו כי בכם בתר ה' לעמד לפניו לשרתו ולהיות לו משרתים ומקטרים:  
My sons, do not forget because Hashem has chosen you to stand before Him and to be His servants and to be those who burn the incense.

<sup>16</sup> The entire verse, dealing with Elisha seeing Eliyahu HaNovi taken up to heaven, reads:

וְאֵלִישָׁע רָאָה וְהוּא מְצַעֵק אָבִי אָבִי רֶכֶב יִשְׂרָאֵל וּפָרְשָׁיו וְלֹא רָאָהוּ עוֹד וַיִּחְזַק בְּבִגְדָיו וַיִּקְרַעֵם לְשָׁנַיִם  
קָרְעִים:

Elisha saw and he was crying out, 'My *father*, my *father*, chariot of Israel and its horseman'; he did not see him any longer and he grasped his clothes and tore them into two, into pieces.

We have to say 'almost anyone else' because if we are singling out Moshe as a father of *B'nei Aharon* because he inaugurated *B'nei Aharon* into the *Kehuna*, shouldn't we also note that Moshe Rabbenu inaugurated his older brother Aharon into the *Kehuna Gedolah*.

Was the change from *hedyot*-commoner that was the status of *B'nei Aharon* to becoming Kohanim more than the change from *hedyot*-commoner that was the status of Aharon himself becoming the Kohen Godol?

I think that the answer is obvious. The change that Aharon underwent was far greater than that of his sons.

One who becomes a Kohen after being a *hedyot* is a changed person. The *tum'a* that affects him does not affect others the same way. The ability to enter in the Mishkan is now in consonance with whom he is; it was not before. If he now marries certain women the result can disqualify his children and if will give us the blessing that G-d has endowed, we will receive G-d's blessing.

The Kohen Godol has all of the above transformations – and many more. He can now enter the Kodosh Kodoshim. He can now offer the *Korbonos* of Yom HaKippurim and bring atonement for Israel. His status is such that if marries certain women that are permitted to other Kohanim, - he brings about disqualification.

Thus, the change that Moshe Rabbenu brought about to his brother Aharon far supercedes that which Moshe did for Aharon's sons.

Is Aharon also תולדת משה?

We note again that our verse of focus writes:

וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת אַהֲרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה בְּיוֹם דִּבְרַהֲרַה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי:

These are the generations of Aharon and Moshe on the day that Hashem spoke with Moshe on Mt. Sinai.

Aharon's name precedes that of Moshe!

Now, this is not the first and only time where the order of the names are reversed.

The Midrash (B'reishis Rabba Parshata 1/15): has already taught us:

בכל מקום הוא מקדים משה לאהרן, ובמקום אחד הוא אומר (שמות ו/כו<sup>17</sup>) הוא אהרן ומשה, מלמד ששניהן שקולין זה כזה:

We always find that the Torah writes the name of 'Moshe' before the name of 'Aharon' when they are both mentioned. But in one place it says, 'It is Aharon and Moshe'. This teaches that they were equal.

But the very expression of the Midrash itself implies that when Aharon is written before the name of Moshe there must be a reason since 'everywhere Moshe comes before Aharon'.

The reason why in our Parshas B'midbar Aharon is mentioned before Moshe may very well be to protect the status of Aharon, Moshe's older brother.

In fact, Moshe was the 'father' of Aharon just like he was the father of Aharon's children. The transformation of Aharon to the *Kehuna Gedolah* was greater than the transformation of his sons.

And this is not mere speculation. We read in a Midrash (Otzar HaMidrashim – Eisenstein and Botei Midrashos *page 12 d.h.* kol haparsha and cited in Torah Sheleima here):

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<sup>17</sup> The entire Posuk reads:

הוא אהרן ומשה אשר אמר ה' להם הוציאו את בני ישראל מארץ מצרים על צבאתם:  
It was Aharon and Moshe that Hashem said to them, 'Take B'nei Yisroel out of the Land of Egypt with their hosts.'

אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה חייך כל גדולה שאני מגדיל לאהרן על ידך אני מגדילו, שנאמר ואתה הקרב אליך את אהרן אחיך, וזה הדבר אשר תעשה להם (שמות כח/א<sup>18</sup>, כט/א<sup>19</sup>), לכך נאמר ואלה תולדות אהרן ומשה.

Hashem said to Moshe, 'By your life, all of the greatness that I aggrandized Aharon I am doing through you, as it says, 'You [Moshe] should bring your brother Aharon close to you' and it says, 'This is the thing that you should do for them'. Therefore it says, 'these are the generations of Aharon and Moshe'.

In fact the Torah should have written **תולדות משה ואהרן** which would have placed Aharon among the generations of Moshe, Moshe being the father and those listed after him being his generations.

But the Torah honored Aharon, the older brother of Moshe and reversed the order so that it would not appear that the younger brother was greater than the older one.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The entire verse reads:

וְאַתָּה הִקְרַב אֵלֶיךָ אֶת אַהֲרֹן אָחִיךָ וְאֶת בְּנָיו אִתּוֹ מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְכַהֵן לִי אַהֲרֹן נֹדֵב וְאַבִּיהוּא אֶלְעָזָר וְאַיִתְמָר בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן:

And you Moshe, bring your brother Aharon and his sons with him close to you from within B'nei Yisroel to serve Me; Aharon, Nodov and Avihu, Elazar and I'somor the sons of Aharon.

<sup>19</sup> The entire verse reads:

וְזֶה הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה לָהֶם לְקַדְּשׁ אֹתָם לְכַהֵן לִי לֶקַח פֶּר אֶחָד בֶּן בָּקָר וְאַיִלִם שְׁנַיִם תְּמִימִם:

This is the thing that you [Moshe] are to do to them to sanctify them to serve Me; take one bullock from the cattle and two rams, all pure.

<sup>20</sup> We read at the episode of the *sneh* (Sh'mos Perek/Posuk):

וַיִּחַר אַף ה' בְּמֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלֹא אַהֲרֹן אָחִיךָ הֲלוֹא יְדַעְתִּי כִּי דַבֵּר יִדְבָּר הוּא וְגַם הִנֵּה הוּא יֵצֵא לִקְרַאתְךָ וְרָאֶךָ וְשִׂמַח בְּלִבּוֹ:

Hashem was angry at Moshe and He said, 'Is there not Aharon your brother, the Levi? I know that he can certainly speak and also behold he is going out to meet you and he will see you and will be happy in his heart.

Rashi writes:

וראך ושמח בלבו - לא כשאתה סבור שיהא מקפיד עליך שאתה עולה לגדולה.

*He will see you and he will be happy in his heart* – not like you, Moshe, you think that he will be angry at you because you have risen to greatness.



And let us take the lesson we have been studying one step further.

Although in Eretz Yisroel we are reading Parshas B'midbar a week prior to the Yom Tov of Shavuos, in most years it is the reading of the Shabbos immediately before Shavuos. And this year, 5779, it is read on Shabbos, Erev Shavuos in *Chutz LaAretz*.

What have we learned here also reflects upon Mattan Torah. We have learned, in our particular context, that we value two types of individuals. One type are those who give us life in this world. The other type are those who give us life in the next world.

The two types are certainly not mutually exclusive. That is what we learned above:

אבדת אביו ואבדת רבו של רבו קודמת שאביו הביאו לעולם הזה ורבו שלמדו חכמה  
מביאו לחיי העולם הבא ואם אביו חכם של אביו קודמת

The lost article of his father and that of his Rav – that of his Rav takes precedence because his father brings him into this world and his Rav who taught him wisdom brings him into *Olom HaBo*. But if his father was a *chacham*, that of his father takes precedence.

There are individuals who bring us both to this world and to the next. So was the personage of Moshe Rabbenu Olov HaShalom. He preserved the lives of all of Israel and he brought them before Hashem at Mt. Sinai so that they would receive G-d's Torah and be able to strive for perfection in this world so that they could enter the next.

And if we are remembering that which Moshe Rabbenu accomplished, should we not remember HaKodosh Boruch Hu Who give us life in both worlds.

Only about Him do we read (Yeshaya Perek 26/Posuk 4):

בטחון בה' עדי עד כי בי...ה' צור עולמים

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Moshe Rabbenu did not wish to offend his brother in the least. And even though the righteous Aharon was not offended at all, he was happy *in his heart*, not just outwardly, certainly Moshe was happy to *davka* have the name Aharon precede his in this instance.

Trust in G-d forever and ever because with *Koh (G-d)*, Hashem is the Rock of the worlds.

In Masseches Menachos (29 b) Chazal say on this verse:

כל התולה בטחונו בהקדוש ברוך הוא - הרי לו מחסה בעולם הזה ולעולם הבא, ... מאי שנא דכתיב ביה ולא כתיב יה? כדרש ר' יהודה בר ר' אילעאי: אלו שני עולמות שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא, אחד בה"י ואחד ביו"ד, ואיני יודע אם העולם הבא ביו"ד והעולם הזה בה"י, אם העולם הזה ביו"ד והעולם הבא בה"י, כשהוא אומר: (בראשית ב/ד<sup>21</sup>) אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם, אל תקרי בהבראם אלא בה"י בראם, הוי אומר: העולם הזה בה"י, והעולם הבא ביו"ד.

Anyone who places his trust in Hashem, Hashem is his shelter in this world and the next. Why does the verse write 'in G-d' and not 'G-d' without the prefix 'in'?

The answer is like it was interpreted by Rabi Yehuda bar Rabi Illa'i: this refers to the two worlds that HaKodosh Boruch Hu created. One He created with the letter *heh* and one He created with the letter *yud*. I do not know if Olom HaBo was created with the letter *yud* and Olom HazeH was created with the letter *heh* or if Olom HazeH was created with the letter *yud* and Olom Habo was created with the letter *heh*. When I read the first, 'These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created – בה-

בראם, do not read *b'hi'bor'om* but *b'heh'bor'om*. [Read the letter *heh* as an independent word.] Thus, I say, 'this world with a *heh* and Olom HaBo with the letter *yud*.

When we remember the Ribbono Shel Olom in this context we will not have a question regarding to whom to return the lost article.

If our *neschama* gets lost we can do *teshuvah* so that when the time comes to return it to its Creator it will be as pure and pristine as it was when its temporary host received it.

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<sup>21</sup> The entire verse reads:

אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם ביום עשות ה' א...לקים ארץ ושמים:  
These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created; on the day that Hashem G-d made the earth and the heavens.

We return the *neshama* to the Ribbono Shel Olom Who created it and Who will take it back when the time comes:

ואתה עתיד ליטלה ממני

You Hashem will take the *neshama* from me.

Hashem is our Father in this world and our Father in the next. On Shavuos we renew our relationship with Him, knowing that all which we have and all which we aspire to have are from Him and will be from Him for eternity.

Shabbat Shalom

Chag Sameach

Rabbi Pollock