



## FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER

OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



SHABBAT HAGADOL

# Jews Stand Together

Klal Yisrael is being attacked and challenged from all sides. Some threaten us physically, others attack our moral standing, yet others try to block us from having the resources to protect ourselves. The world's social justice warriors who could always count on the support and allyship of Jews have joined forces with those who oppose the Jewish people's right to defend their very existence. The nation that dwells alone would be justified in feeling lonely.

Our *emunah*, our faith and recognition that *Ata imadi*, Hashem is with us, is critical to our continued strength. But no less fundamental to our future as a people is the extent to which we are there for each other, standing up proudly and protectively against those who cast at us both aspersions and stones.

*Vayigdal Moshe vayeitzei el echav*. Moshe first emerged from Pharaoh's palace to concern

himself with and connect to the Jewish people (Shemos 2:11). He observed their oppression and was immediately there for them, defending a Jew under attack by subduing his Egyptian attacker. Moshe was nevertheless left wondering and confused as to why specifically his people, *Klal Yisrael*, deserved to suffer such persecution, until on the very next day he encountered two Jews fighting with each other who respond to Moshe's attempted intervention by turning on him and informing on him to Pharaoh. Here Moshe sadly saw that instead of Jews closing ranks to be there for each other, they were fighting with and turning on each other, leading Moshe to remark, *achein noda hadavar*, "the matter is now known." As our sages rendered this, Moshe now understood that the reason for our unusual suffering was this kind of betrayal (Rashi Shemos 2:14). The key to our fate as a people is the extent to which we are there for each other. Lacking that bond of mutual care and responsibility, we did not deserve freedom.

Moshe would be the one chosen to lead the Jewish nation to freedom because it was he who came out of the safety of the palace to take notice of how individual Jews were suffering and to do his part to stand up for them.

This idea reappears later in the story (Shemos 5:23), when Moshe - after having been charged by G-d to go to Pharaoh to seek freedom for the Jewish people - saw things go from bad to worse. Why would Hashem send him on a mission of redemption that produced failure instead of success? Why

In loving memory of  
our dear mother, grandmother  
and great-grandmother

**DOROTHY WEINER z"l**

On her 19th Yahrtzeit  
שביעי של פסח

Rena and Zev Lewis  
Heschel and Sarelle Weiner

did it have to get worse before it got better? “Why have you harmed this people? Why did you send me?!”

While Moshe was correct that his request made the bondage worse, it also made the Jewish people better, moving them to rise to the challenge and stand up for each other.

In response to Moshe’s plea for relief, Pharaoh chose instead to double down and stopped giving straw to the Jewish people to make the bricks while maintaining the same production quotas. As the Torah records (Shemos 5:14), there were Jewish officers accountable to the Egyptians whose job it was to ensure that the quotas were met who at this point refused to squeeze any more out of their fellow Jews. Instead, they chose to absorb the blows of the Egyptians and protect their brothers from being unjustly punished (see Rashi to Bamidbar 11:16). After seeing from Moshe’s “failed mission” that Pharaoh would not be there for the Jews, these officers realized that the Jews would only find support from each other. Now, instead of a Jew turning on another Jew, they stood up for and protected each other.

“Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh, for with a mighty hand he will send them out and with a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land.’” (Shemos 6:1) Once Hashem sees us standing up for each other, He is ready to redeem us. *Achein noda hadavar*. Here again, the key to our fate as a people is the extent to which we are there for each other.

The Haggadah refers to the wicked son who removes himself from the community by speaking as an outsider about the Jewish people’s behaviors and experiences. As Rambam wrote (Hilchos Teshuva 3:11):



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A person who separates himself from the community even though he has not transgressed any sins... who separates himself from the congregation of Israel and does not fulfill mitzvot together with them, does not take part in their hardships, or join in their communal fasts, but rather goes on his own individual path as if he is from another nation, does not have a portion in the world to come.

At this treacherous time, our identification with each other and our standing up for each other is most needed, but it is also most telling. Let us not – as the *metzorah* – park ourselves outside the *machaneh* of Jewish community and experience by speaking negatively of each other in any forum. Let us both privately and publicly speak proudly and protectively of every individual Jew and of our precious nation and then be privileged to merit *geulah*. ■