



THE SHALOM BAYIT JOURNAL



Parashat Devarim

Leading in Loneliness

Understanding the Torah and the Human Experience

Leadership is filled with purpose, but it can also be an isolating experience. Some of the most prominent and important leaders in the world are also the loneliest. The more people depend on us, the fewer people we often feel we can depend on.

Psychologists sometimes refer to this experience as role isolation. The loneliness that can accompany carrying significant responsibility. Over time, carrying everyone else's burdens can lead to emotional exhaustion and compassion fatigue.

Our emotional capacity is not unlimited, and even the strongest leaders need support.

When Sefer Devarim opens, Moshe Rabbeinu reflects on the forty years he spent leading Bnei Yisrael. Before describing the weight he carried, he first makes a simple admission:

"וְאָמַר אֲלֵכֶם בְּעַת הַהוּא לֹא־אוּכַל לְבַדִּי שָׂאת אֶתְכֶם"

"Thereupon I said to you, 'I cannot bear the burden of you by myself.'" (Devarim 1:9)

Ibn Ezra connects these words to Yitro's earlier advice: "You cannot do it alone" (Shemot 18:18). Moshe's burden was real, but he was never meant to carry it alone. A few verses later, Moshe says:

"אֵיכָה אֶשָּׂא לְבַדִּי"

"How can I bear alone your trouble, your burden, and your disputes?" (Devarim 1:12)

Moshe's words remind us that leadership was never meant to be carried by one person alone.

The Maharal explains that Moshe's use of the word "אֵיכָה" reflects a sense of longing. Rather than simply expressing his inability to continue, Moshe wanted to keep carrying the people as he always had, but he could no longer do so.

Even in this moment, Moshe still desired to carry the people. Leadership had become heavy, but his commitment to the relationship remained unchanged.

Borch Olam's response was not to remove the burden, but to give Moshe partners to help carry it.

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Throughout the wilderness, the relationship between Moshe and the people was often strained. They questioned his leadership, challenged his decisions, and struggled to place their trust in him.

The Torah also shows us how Moshe carried that burden. When he faced difficult decisions, he repeatedly turned to Boreh Olam for guidance and support. He accepted Yitro's advice to share responsibility. Later, Boreh Olam instructed him to appoint seventy elders, saying:

"וְנָשְׂאוּ אִתְּךָ בְּמִשְׁאֵל הָעָם וְלֹא־תִשָּׂא אֹתָהּ לְבַדְּךָ"

"They shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you will not bear it alone." (Bamidbar 11:17)

Like any healthy relationship, success comes through partnership, not from one person carrying all the weight. The same principle applies far beyond leadership.

In my work with relationships, I see a similar experience. Rightfully so, I hear men say, "Nobody knows how much I'm carrying," or, "I have to hold everything together by myself."

Many of us feel deeply responsible for our families, and the people that we love. Responsibility gives life meaning, but it can also become isolating.

The more dependable someone becomes, the easier it is for others to overlook the weight they are carrying.

Many quietly carry burdens that no one else sees. They continue showing up for others long after their emotional capacity has begun to wear thin.

Strength is not measured by how much we can carry alone. It is measured by how faithfully we carry our responsibilities and by having the wisdom to know when to lean on others along the way.

If you feel that you are carrying too much, do not confuse isolation with strength. Pause before reacting. Make time to reflect, turn to Boreh Olam in prayer, and allow someone you trust to help carry the burden.

Protect your emotional capacity so you can continue showing up for your family, your community, and your purpose. Even Moshe Rabenu was not meant to lead entirely alone. Neither are we.



About The Shalom Bayit Journal

The Shalom Bayit Journal explores the intersection of Torah, psychology, relationships, and the human experience. Through thoughtful essays and practical reflection, the Journal seeks to make timeless wisdom meaningful and accessible for everyday life.

