

This week's parasha, Va'era, begins with Hashem commanding Moshe to speak to the Israelites and reveal their immanent redemption. The Israelites do not listen to him, according to chapter 6, verse 9, because their spirits were crushed by bondage. So when, in the next verse, Hashem starts commanding Moshe to go confront Pharaoh, Moshe protests, in verse 12: "The Israelites would not listen to me; how then should Pharaoh heed me, a man of impeded speech!"

Contemporary scholar Nechama Leibowitz points out, "[Moshe] had not been brought up with [the Israelites], had not lived their bondage and suffering and therefore had no understanding of their impatience. Is it any wonder that his own flickering confidence in his ability to wrestle with Pharaoh had been completely doused?"

The amazing thing is that, in response, Hashem doesn't try to convince Moshe that he'll be up for the task, instead, the next verse says, "So Hashem spoke to both Moses and Aaron in regard to the Israelites and Pharaoh king of Egypt, instructing them to deliver the Israelites from the land of Egypt." Hashem responds to Moshe's concern by giving him a partner in the work. Now, earlier, in last week's parashah, Hashem already had assigned Aaron the task of speaking for Moshe, but now, not only the transmission, but the revelation is shared. Moshe does not have to hold the burden of Divine vision alone; Hashem speaks to Aaron as well.

From the creation of Humans in the very first parashah, when Hashem sees "*Lo tov heyot adam l'vado*" – "It is not good for the human to be alone," Torah reminds us that the project of being human is a collective one. And in this week's parashah, Torah reminds us that leadership, especially, requires partnership. Neither Moshe or Aaron would have had the *koach*, the strength, alone to get the people out, but together, they were able to face Pharaoh and inspire the people.

And so this evening at Temple Beth Israel, we celebrate the collective leadership that holds and enacts the vision for our congregation.