

MY HEAVY BROTHER

by Rabbi Dovid Green

He May Be Heavy, but He's My Brother

In this week's parsha we are introduced to one of the most revolutionary people ever to live - Moshe Rabbainu (Moses, our teacher). Three major world religions are based on the Torah which Moshe Rabbainu brought down for us. The rise of monotheism and a sharp drop in polytheism is a result of Torah coming into the world. Much of judicial law has its source in the Bible. What did Moshe do which made him such a pivotal person in Jewish and World history?

The Torah states: "And Moshe grew, and he went out to his brethren, and he saw their burdens" (Exodus 2:11). On this verse the Midrash Rabah writes: What is the deeper meaning of "he saw (their burdens)"? He saw their burdens and cried, and said "a pity on you, I could die over you. Working with mortar is such a difficult form of work." Moshe would personally help each one in his work.

G-d (saw this and) said (to Himself) "You (Moshe), left your own concerns to occupy yourself with the concerns of Yisrael (the Jews), (for that) I will leave (My concerns) the upper and lower (worlds), and come down to speak to you." That is the meaning of the verse (which is later stated), "and G-d saw that he (Moshe) turned to see, and He called to him from the midst of the (burning) bush" (Exodus 3:4)

G-d saw that Moshe diverted from his way to see the sight of the burning bush, so He called to Moshe. On a deeper level, the Midrash understands that the reason that G-d called to Moshe was because he "turned" to see. It means that while he was in Egypt, when he went out to his brethren, he "turned" from his own important matters to "see," that is, to share, and to feel the pain of their troubles. The verse is hinting to us that for that reason he merited that G-d spoke to him. This character trait is termed "carrying the load with one's fellow," when one experiences another's pain and suffering as if it was his own.

The "Alter" from Kelm praises this character trait very highly. He notes that all of the wonderful things which Moshe Rabbainu accomplished, namely, bringing them close to G-d, bringing them to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, preparing them to inherit the Land of Israel, and building the Holy Temple, all were ultimately because of this character trait which he possessed.

Moshe's concern for his brethren is what led him to slay the Egyptian who was mercilessly oppressing another Jew. This is what caused him to leave Egypt and go to Midyan where he would

come close to the Mountain of G-d, and the vision of the burning bush.

We see, then, that this trait of sharing actively in another's pain and troubles has unlimited positive implications. This is not a mere story of a hero. There is an important life-lesson which the Torah is conveying to us. We too can achieve greatness through our own acquisition of this trait. We should all see what we can do to put this into practice. Anyone who lives among people has countless opportunities to empathize with others and lighten their load by carrying it together with them. Let us all put it on the top of our priority list, so we can reap the benefits together.

Good Shabbos!

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