

EXACTLY WHY HE WAS CHOSEN

by Rabbi Label Lam

Moshe replied to HASHEM, "Please my Lord, I am not a man of words, also not since yesterday, nor since the day before yesterday, nor since You first spoke to Your servant, for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of speech." (Shemos 4:10)

Also not since yesterday etc.: The wording of this verse teaches that the Holy One, Blessed is He, spent a full seven days persuading Moshe at the thorn-bush to undertake His mission...And all this reluctance on the part of Moshe was because he did not want to assume superiority over his brother Aaron who was older than Moshe and already a prophet. (Rashi)

...Is there not Aaron your brother the Levite? I know that he will surely speak; moreover, behold he is going out to meet you and he will see you and he will rejoice in his heart. (Shemos 4: 14)

And he will see you and he will rejoice in his heart: It is not as you think Moshe that he will resent you because you are ascending to greatness. (Rashi)

It's worthwhile to marvel at the fact that Moshe resisted accepting this mission and defied The Almighty for one whole week. To what may we attribute Moshe's stubborn refusal? How can he possibly stand in opposition to the will of his Maker? It's certainly an audacious posture for any mortal to assume. Why the big fight?

Finally, we discover that Moshe did not want to upstage his older brother Aaron. Therefore he held out till Aaron would have a role and until it was clarified that Aaron was genuinely pleased with Moshe's ascendancy to greatness. Even, still, why seven days? Why employ so many excuses? Why was this even tolerated?

When Reb Moshe Feinstein ztl. was asked why he felt he had merited a long life he is reputed to have answered, "I tried never to hurt another person." It may sound like a light and maybe even a trite matter, that is, until we factor in the following story which is recorded in his biography: The elder Reb Moshe was getting into a car in front of the Yeshiva surrounded by students. When he was seated, the car door was closed and the driver pulled away from the curb. After driving a few blocks away, Reb Moshe asked the driver if he would not mind pulling off to the side of the road. When the driver stopped the car Reb Moshe opened the door and removed his frail hand from where the door had just been slammed on his aged fingers. The driver was mortified and asked Reb Moshe why he did not say something way back there when the door was closed. Reb Moshe told the driver that he did not want to say anything immediately because it would have caused a terrible upset to the

young man that closed the door. He would never have forgiven himself. So Reb Moshe remained silent till the car had traveled a safe distance away.

It's beyond amazing to comprehend! Reb Moshe would have to be able to feel the anticipated mental anguish of this young student even more than his own present jolt of pain. This incident represents a lifetime of living with the principle of trying not to hurt another person. Who can possibly be prepared for such a sudden test? It's no wonder that Reb Moshe was the undisputed Gadol HaDor, leader of the generation.

I once asked a Rosh HaYeshiva from Israel whether or not it was a good thing that Moshe withheld himself from accepting the mission for an entire week just so as not to offend his older brother. He told me, "That's exactly why he was chosen" DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.