

NO PAIN NO GAIN

by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch

Parshas Shlach

No Pain No Gain

By Rabbi Elly Broch

After more than a year in the wilderness - receiving the Torah, building the Mishkan (Tabernacle), forging the foundation of our nationhood - the Children of Israel were prepared to go into the Promised Land. But the scouts they dispatched to spy the land returned with a damning report that deflated the nation. "The entire assembly raised up and issued its voice; the people wept that night. All the children of Israel murmured against Moshe and Aaron, and the entire assembly said to them, 'If only we had died in the land of Egypt. Why is G-d bringing us to this land to die by the sword?'" (Bamidbar/Numbers 14:1-3)

How could the spies inform them that they would not be able to conquer the land after all the miracles that they had seen in Egypt, when leaving Egypt and at Mount Sinai? It should have been obvious to them that nothing is impossible for the Master of the Universe.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1) explains that there is a great difference between individuals who have developed a faith in and loyalty to G-d through labor and toil, and those who experience an epiphany through miracles and wonders. The generation of the wilderness gained their awareness of G-d through the miracles that they witnessed over the prior two years. Although this generation had the greatest awareness of the Creator in the history of the world, they were accustomed to believe only in that which their eyes saw. Since they had only seen supernatural miracles, but had not yet observed G-d's providence manifest in nature, such as His intervention to assure victory in battle and conquest, they could not fathom this type of miracle. Without supernatural intervention, they would have to engage in a war that they could not naturally win. Since their faith was rooted in G-d's obvious wonders they lacked a developed awareness of G-d and the spiritual world, maintaining an attitude of "I'll believe it when I see it". This generation believed because they did actually see wonders, but they had not been trained to use their intellectual faculties and rational thought to have faith even before any sign of assistance or respite were apparent.

Rabbi Avigdor Miller (2) expounds that gaining a strong and authentic trust in G-d takes a lifetime of effort. One must invest much time and effort contemplating the design and complexity evident in Creation, the laws of the Torah and its Prophecies, and accurate historical events on the world level and individual level. Judaism does not embrace blind faith and a mere utterance of "I believe". There must be honest and careful study of the facts that result in an informed decision and a developed understanding of our Creator.

Have a Good Shabbos!

(1) 1895-1986; Rosh Yeshiva/Dean of Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem in New York City; the leading Halachic/Jewish legal decisor of his time and one of the principal leaders of Torah Jewry through much of the last century

(2) 1908-2001; a prolific author and popular speaker who specialized in mussar (introspective Jewish self-improvement) and Jewish history, Rabbi Miller commanded a worldwide following through his books and tapes: of the tens of thousands of Torah lectures he delivered, more than 2,000 were preserved on cassettes

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