

RECOGNIZE THE HAND OF G-D

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

"But they did not listen to Moshe, because of their fallen spirits and the difficult work..." [6:9]

The Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisrael Meyer Kagan, was once sitting with his family and friends, and he spoke about the terrible situation in the Jewish community of his day. People had truly lost their faith in G-d, and were moving away from religion.

Reb Naftali was the Rosh Mesivta (high school principal) in the yeshiva in Radin, and he was one of those listening. He responded, "Why is this a great surprise? Even in Egypt, when the Jews still remembered their forefathers, and also knew that the exile would only last 400 years, they were nonetheless so disheartened by the sheer amount of work placed upon them, that they lost hope. In our current situation, our forefathers are long forgotten, and our exile is apparently endless. Why should we be surprised then, if we see people losing their faith?"

The Chofetz Chaim considered this, and realized that he was right. "You are a good defender for Israel," he said. "Your words should ascend before the Holy Throne."

No one should tell you that faith is easy. It may be possible to achieve it with logical steps, rather than a "leap." It can be maintained with study and consideration. But it is hardly trivial.

It is difficult for us to recognize that Hand of G-d in painful events. As Rabbi Zev Leff points out, this is a result of our own limited perspective. The Talmud (Pesachim 50a) asks, how can the prophet write (Zechariah 14:9) "On that day G-d will be One, and His Name, One"? Are G-d and His Name not One, right now?

The answer is that, in reality, everything that G-d does is good, but in our current circumstances we are unable to recognize this. We distinguish between the blessing ("hatov vehameitiv", Who is good and does good) that we say upon receiving good news, versus the blessing that we say upon bad news ("Dayan haEmes," the True Judge). In the World to Come, and in the Messianic Era, we will recognize that these are one and the same. We will see G-d's Mercy in every event. Today, we do not pronounce the four-letter name of G-d which indicates His transcendence of time, and His Mercy -- then, we will.

So do not be overly disappointed if, in the midst of trying times, you find yourself with doubts. On the contrary, understand that such trials are hardly new. Just strengthen yourself with the knowledge that those who remained strong were right, and were eventually taken out of Egypt. May we see this

exile end soon, as well, and reach the days when "G-d will be One, and His Name, One."