# BELIEVE, AND IT WILL COME TRUE

*by Rabbi Eliyahu Hoffmann*

*Moshe said to Hashem, "Behold! The Children of Israel have not listened to me, so how will Pharaoh listen to me?"* (6:12)

Rashi comments that Moshe makes use of a kal-vechomer, an argument that derives the more obvious from the less-so. If Bnei Yisrael, who have every reason to want to believe [that Hashem will redeem them], refuse to do so, then Pharaoh, who has every reason not to believe, certainly won't!

Mefarshim question the logic: The Torah says the Jews were unable to listen [i.e. accept] Moshe's promises because of the unbearable conditions of their slavery: "...due to shortness of breath and hard work," (6:9). How, if so, does their lack of acceptance prove that Pharaoh will likewise discount Moshe's promises? He was (obviously) not affected by the atrocious conditions to which he subjected his slaves.

The Kedushas Yom Tov notes a difficulty with the order of the verses at the beginning of parshas Va'eira:

I have also heard the screams of the Children of Israel, and I recall My covenant. Therefore, say to the Children of Israel, "I am Hashem. I will take them out from beneath the burden of Egypt..."

Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying. "Come, speak to Pharaoh, king of Egypt - that he should send the Children of Israel out of his land." (6:5-11)

Wouldn't it have been more logical for Hashem to first instruct Moshe to approach Pharaoh and command him to release the Jews, and then to tell the Jews of Hashem's promise and their imminent redemption?

"Jews receive their sustenance in this world only through their faith [in Hashem]" (Midrash).

The Ohev Yisrael (parshas Noach) explains that the Hebrew word for faith, emunah, has two connotations. 1) Belief in its most simple form. 2) It also means to draw, or raise, such as (Esther 2:7), "And [Mordechai] raised Hadassah [Esther]." To the extent one believes in Hashem and places his complete faith in Him, he says, his beliefs play themselves out and his wishes are fulfilled.

Perhaps the concept can in some basic way be explained thus: When we pray, we accept the fact that our prayers can in some way influence Hashem. For example, we know that prayers have the capacity to overturn Heavenly decrees, despite the fact that the decrees were themselves in essence Hashem's will. Just as a father has a hard time saying 'no' to his son, especially when his son

asks for something very sweetly, so too, to the extent we can express it, our prayers can influence Hashem's actions, especially when they're 'sweet' and emanate from the depths of our souls. Shir Ha-Shirim (Song of Songs 2:14): "Let Me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet."

Prayer, in its essence, is an expression of faith. We place our needs and desires before Hashem, and recognize that only He can truly fulfil them. This, perhaps, is the underlying concept of the second meaning of emunah, to draw. The deeper our faith in Hashem, the greater our ability to draw or bring about His positive influence on our lives and in the world.

With this concept he explains a puzzling Rashi in parshas Noach. "And Noach and sons and his wife and the wives of his sons entered the Ark, because of the flood waters (Bereishis/Genesis 7:7)." Why does the Torah go out of its way to state the obvious, that they entered the Ark because of the flood?

Because, Rashi explains, Noach's faith was deficient - he believed, but not completely. He didn't enter the Ark because Hashem said the flood was coming; he waited until it came.

How is it possible, the Maggid of Zlotchov [quoted in Ohev Yisrael] asks, that Noach, whom none other than Hashem Himself called a tzaddik, was deficient in his faith?

Noach believed that Hashem could bring a flood. But he didn't want to believe He would. Noach feared, he says, that his belief the flood was imminent could in some way influence things, so he chose to 'not to believe'; to be circumspect, in order that his faith not be in any way a factor in the harsh decree.

R' Chaim of Brisk once asked his students. "We know," he said, "that every feeling and emotion can be used for both good and bad. One can love Hashem, love another Jew, or he can choose to love something forbidden. We can use anger to empower ourselves when we act inappropriately, to rebuke those who defame Hashem, or we can abuse anger by losing our tempers. But of what possible use," he asked, "is the emotion of apikorsus (disbelief, atheism)?

"I'll tell you," he answered. "When a poor man comes knocking at your door, and says he lacks funds to marry off his daughter, do not comfort him, or yourself, by telling him, 'It will be alright, just believe in Hashem.' No! This is not the time to bring up faith. Be an apikorus! Say, 'This man needs help - I must do something for him, now, or who knows what will be!" Perhaps Noach found another use for the middah of disbelief.

The reason, the Kedushas Yom Tov explains, that Moshe first promised the Jews, "I will take them out from beneath the burden of Egypt..." and only then told Moshe to speak to Pharaoh, is because their faith was to be the impetus of the ge'ulah (redemption). By placing their unswerving trust in Hashem, they would annul the Heavenly decree that they must suffer slavery in Egypt, and perhaps, indeed, influence Hashem [to the extent we can express it] to redeem them before the appointed time.

Perhaps it was the fact that things had only gotten worse since Moshe arrived. For whatever reason, they found it hard to believe. And Moshe said to Hashem, "Behold! The Children of Israel have not listened to me - they have failed to place their trust in You, and in doing so, they may have squandered the opportunity to hasten the redemption. "So how will Pharaoh listen to me?"

Ultimately, of course, Hashem brought the plagues on the Egyptians, gradually relieved the nation from its servitude, they trusted Hashem, and were redeemed. Have a good Shabbos. Text Copyright © 2008 by Rabbi Eliyahu Hoffmann and **Torah.org**