

# TO ASK OR TO TRUST?

*by Rabbi Aron Tendler*

As the chosen redeemer of the Jewish people, what was Moshe's job description? History refers to Moshe as "Our Teacher." However, an analysis of Moshe's relationship with the Jewish people reveals a far more exacting and detailed job description.

Moshe's mission started at the Burning Bush when G-d said to him, "Go to Pharaoh and take the Jews out of Egypt." (3:10). For all intents and purposes, that was it for the job description. The interview was over, and Moshe had the job! Moshe was supposed to go to Pharaoh, and take the Jews out. That was it! What Moshe was supposed to say to Pharaoh and how he was to take the Jews out of Egypt were not explained. In fact, the only reason G-d continued talking to Moshe and gave him a bag of tricks with which to impress Pharaoh and the enslaved Jews was because Moshe began to question G-d. Had Moshe simply said, "OK, thank you!" off he would have gone to Egypt! What would have happened if Moshe had not questioned G-d? How different would the story of the Exodus have been?

I believe that an analysis of Moshe's exchange with G-d at the end of last week's Parsha, and G-d's answer to Moshe that continues in this week's Parsha reveals the answer.

In last week's Parsha it was decided that Moshe and Aharon would go to Pharaoh and tell him to let the Jews leave Egypt. As the Torah records, the confrontation did not go well and instead of the Jews being set free Pharaoh made their lot worse. The Jewish overseers verbally assaulted Moshe for making things worse and Moshe then complained to G-d. "Why have You done evil to this people, why have You sent me?"

There are two classic approaches to understand Moshe's question. 1. Moshe challenged G-d's justice. In his fervor and concern over the plight of the Jewish people, Moshe allowed himself the right to question G-d's judiciousness.

2. Moshe did not challenge G-d's judiciousness. Moshe was reflecting back on his own obvious inadequacies. Clearly, G-d's judiciousness could not be questioned. "G-d is a Rock and all His ways are just and perfect." However, G-d is limited by the actions of humans.

Whenever G-d works through a human agent, there is the possibility of that agent messing up. (Similar to the way computers must feel about us) If the human agent sins, or chooses to go against G-d's instructions, the original plan will not work. The result will of course be the same because G-d has unlimited resources with which to accomplish his intended goal. However, the original plan

involving the human agent and allotted time schedule would have to be changed. Therefore, when the plan did not work as Moshe thought it would it was because Moshe was not worthy of being the medium through which G-d's power would be miraculously revealed.

G-d's response to Moshe must be analyzed in relation to both possible explanations of Moshe's complaint. According to Rashi, G-d immediately compared Moshe's questioning of either his own inadequacy or G-d's judiciousness to Avraham's unquestioning belief and loyalty. "Although I promised Avraham that his future children would come through Yitzchak, Avraham did not question Me when I told him to sacrifice Yitzchak! Yet, you now question my methods!" (Rashi 6:1)

Rashi's presentation of G-d's opening response easily follows the first of our possible explanations of Moshe's complaint. G-d was criticizing Moshe for questioning G-d's judiciousness by contrasting him with Avraham's absolute belief and trust in G-d. "Just as Avraham did not question My methods so too you should not question My methods."

In this week's Parsha, G-d continued his critique of Moshe's lack of trust. "In fact, Avraham had more reason to question My methods than Moshe. It was to Avraham that I had promised that Yitzchak would father a nation of children who would inherit the land of Canaan. Avraham lived to see two grandchildren and no more. He never lived to see the fulfillment of the promise. However, you Moshe are standing on the threshold of redemption. You are to be the fulfillment of My promise to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. What right do you have to question My judiciousness!" (Rashi, 6:2,3,4) However, according to the second explanation of Moshe's complaint, G-d's response does not seem to address Moshe's question. If Moshe was questioning his own inadequacies as the human agent and not G-d's judiciousness, how did the comparison with Avraham answer Moshe's doubts? If anything, it lent credence to Moshe's own sense of inadequacies. "Yes, You are absolutely right! I am inadequate. I am lacking in trust and belief. I am not an Avraham a Yitzchak or a Yaakov. They would have been deserving of revealing Your greatness in the world. I, as my own question reveals, am not worthy! Didn't I tell You to send someone else!"

The truth is that the comparison to the Forefathers was the perfect answer to Moshe's proclaimed inadequacy. Regardless of why, G-d had chosen Moshe to do the job. He was the one. Had G-d wanted to, He would have chosen someone else.

The truth is that Moshe was the perfect person for the job for the very reasons that he appeared to be inadequate. G-d wanted a human agent who on his own could not have possibly gotten the job done. Therefore, it would be clear to the world that G-d was the One Who had taken the Jews out of slavery and no one else.

Moshe was to one day be proclaimed by G-d as "the most humble of all men to have ever lived." However, there are times when humility is a weakness rather than a strength. Humility that recognizes ability but avoids arrogance is a virtue. Humility that denies ability and responsibility is a weakness. In last week's Parsha, G-d would have killed Moshe if not for Tziporah's quick intervention.

This shows that G-d was prepared to pull the plug on Operation Moses if Moshe proved to be inadequate. Had that happened, we most likely would have never heard about Moshe's miraculous birth, development, and demise. Instead, the story of the Exodus would have had a different set of players and events. The result would have been the same. The Jews would have been freed and G-d's greatness would have been revealed. Therefore, it was incumbent upon Moshe to accept that he was the chosen Redeemer, whether he understood it or not, whether he wanted the job or not.

When Moshe confronted G-d by questioning his own adequacy for the job of Redeemer, he questioned G-d's methods. Moshe was not ignorant of his own actions. Moshe knew whether he had sinned between the time he was given the job and the time he stood before Pharaoh. He had not! The one sin of not giving his son a Bris had been dealt with. Therefore, Moshe should have proceeded with absolute confidence that what he was doing was playing a role in a script that had been carefully scripted by G-d. Regardless of his questions and doubts, G-d was in charge.

G-d compared Moshe to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yakov because they epitomized trust. Regardless of why Moshe questioned G-d's plan, it reflected a lack of trust in G-d's handling of the operation. True, Moshe was to be the most humble of all men, however, G-d wanted to make sure that his humility was a virtue and not a weakness.

Had Moshe accepted the job from the very beginning without questioning his own inadequacy or his trust in G-d, the story of the Exodus would have been far more profound and revealing. Moshe would have gone directly to Pharaoh, told him that G-d had sent him with the message, "Let My people go!" and Pharaoh would have said "Yes, go!" That would have been it! No plagues, no other miracles, just a simple go! That would have been the greatest miracle of all. As my Grandfather Zt'l writes in Darash Moshe, it would have been the manifestation of the G-d who sets limits to the world and has absolute control over all things, including the actions of humans. When it was the time for redemption and the end of slavery Pharaoh would have let the Jews go! It would have revealed that the enslavement was for a reason and that G-d was the absolute ruler of all things including time and circumstance. Instead, Moshe argued with G-d and questioned His methodology necessitating a bag of tricks and miracles to reveal G-d's greatness.

---

Copyright © 2001 by [Rabbi Aron Tendler](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

---

The author is Rabbi of Shaarey Zedek Congregation, Valley Village, CA.

---