

# MOSES'S LEGACY GOES ON

*by Rabbi Berel Wein*

Moshe can no longer lead the Jewish people. He informs us that he is no longer allowed "to forth out or to come in." He whose eyes did not dim even in death is now shorn of his superhuman powers and subject to the mortality that faces us all. At that moment Moshe does not wallow in sadness nor does he seem to review in detail his life's achievements and the disappointments that occurred in his lifetime of greatness.

He expresses no regrets and voices no complaints. He does not refer to those who persecuted him, injured his pride, questioned his worth or doubted his words. Rather his whole focus is on the future of the Jewish people. He points out that their future failings will clearly lead to tragedy and defeat but never to complete destruction. He cautions them against falling into the trap of adopting new ideas and mores simply for the sake of change or newness.

He makes it abundantly clear that the covenant of Israel with God and His Torah contains no escape or cancellation clauses. The bond is an eternal one. He sees the future and continues to look forward to new generations and recurring challenges. To the end he remains the leader and not the historian, the teacher and not merely the observer.

It is the presence of this implicit spirit of innate optimism, even in the face of known problems and Jewish failings, which characterizes Moshe's relationship with the Jewish people and his guidance of Israel through all of its generations. That is why "there arose none like Moshe" in all of Jewish history.

The Torah teaches us "Vayelech Moshe" - Moshe went and walked and proceeded. Immediately thereafter the Torah records for us that Moshe said "I cannot go forth or return any longer." So which is it? Did Moshe walk forth and proceed or did he remain housebound and passive. It is obvious that Moshe's inability to go forth and return describes the physical limitations placed upon him on his last days on earth.

But "Vayelech Moshe" - Moshe's goings and comings are the spiritual guidance and moral vision that he invested in the Jewish people that remain vital and active in all later generations of Israel even after Moshe's passing. Leadership and inspiration is rarely judged by physical criteria.

Franklin Roosevelt was afflicted with polio before he rose to become the president of the United States. He certainly is to be reckoned as one of the strongest and most influential presidents in American history though he could not physically go forth or come in. If we see this truism in the life of a "regular" human being such a Roosevelt, how much more so is this obvious in the life and

achievements of the superhuman Moshe.

Vayelech not only means that Moshe once went but it also implies grammatically in Hebrew that Moshe is still going forth. The Jewish people are still guided by Moshe's Torah and teachings and his spiritual legacy continues to inspire and instruct. As long as there are Jews in the world, Moshe will continue to go forth and come into our hearts and minds.

Shabat shalom,

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Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)