

BELIEF COMES FROM WITHIN

by Rabbi Berel Wein

Moshe faces a crisis of faith at the onset of this week's parsha. He apparently has made no headway with and little impression on the Pharaoh of Egypt. The situation of the Jewish slaves has worsened considerably and the leaders of the people place blame upon Moshe for that situation.

So, Moshe is apparently unsuccessful with the Pharaoh and unsuccessful with the Jewish people all at one and the same time. Is it any wonder that Moshe complains to the Lord about this mission which, he now reiterates, he wishes to abandon? And even though the Torah does not state so in so many specific words, it is obvious that Moshe, so to speak, is disappointed in God as well.

The Lord patiently sends him back to his task and reassures him that all will yet turn out well for him and his people. And by the end of the parsha, we find Moshe in full strength and confidence delivering his message of redemption to Pharaoh and to the Jewish people.

This crisis of faith has somehow passed, though we do not find that Moshe's earlier concerns have been addressed. The Lord merely reiterates the message that Moshe has already heard from Him a number of times. Yet Moshe is revitalized now that he hears God's promise once again, of Jewish redemption from Egyptian bondage.

Repeated promises rarely if ever inspire. So what causes this change of spirit and attitude within Moshe's thoughts and actions? What is the catalyst for his new found optimism and boldness of speech and purpose?

I have often felt that it was the very crisis of faith that Moshe endured that was the main contributing factor to his future steadfastness and strength of purpose. Only someone who has experienced doubt can truly come to faith.

The Lord created a world that tests our faith in Him daily. Life automatically introduces doubt into our existence. It is in dealing with our omnipresent doubts, with the unfairness of life itself and with the illogic and irrationality of it all that one achieves the plateau of faith and spiritual strength. Only the doubter can become a strong believer.

It is Moshe's crisis of faith that now anneals and strengthens his belief in his mission as the savior of Israel from Egyptian bondage. The rabbis stated that, "All things are in the hand of Heaven, except for fear and belief in Heaven itself." Therefore the Lord, so to speak, does not respond to Moshe's complaints directly. He does not explain to Moshe why the process of redemption has seemingly

taken on such a difficult and negative turn. The Lord makes no excuses for what has occurred. He only tells Moshe to keep on persevering and redemption will eventually arrive.

Moshe has to overcome his crisis of faith on his own. There is no one that can help make one believe except for the person himself. This is probably the most important message that one can derive from the study of this week's parsha.

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