

# TRYING EXPERIENCE

*by Rabbi Raymond Beyda*

*"The Children of Israel were armed when they went up from Egypt" Shemot 13:18*

From the outset the Children of Israel were believers the sons of believers. Before the plagues and the Exodus the Torah testifies that they believed in Moshe as Hashem's true messenger as it says: "VaYamen Ha Am" - The nation believed. The experience of the next year only took them higher and higher in their trust in the Almighty as they witnessed the power and glory of His miracles. As they left the civilized environs of Egypt and set out for a journey through uninhabited wilderness, they took very little in the way of food and water. They trusted that if they followed Hashem's instruction He would provide for them. The 3 million travelers were complimented by G-d through the words of the prophet years later: "I remember the kindness of your youth...your going after Me in the desert in a land that was uncultivated."

However, there seems to be a glaring contradiction in the next verse. The Torah informs us that the same people who traveled with minimal provisions left the land of Egypt armed and ready for war - and this was in spite of the fact that Hashem led them on a circuitous route in order to avoid confrontation with the dangerous Philistines. They took no food demonstrating total trust although food would be a daily necessity yet they also armed themselves for battle although the probability of confrontation was remote. Were they true believers or not? Did they trust Hashem or their own prowess?

The lesson is that taking natural steps to achieve one's goals is not a contradiction to bitahon - trust in the Almighty - it is a requirement. We see at the end of the parashah the brazen attack on the newly freed slaves by the nation of Amalek. Moshe immediately instructs Yehoshua to conduct a draft and select men suitable for victory in battle with the enemy. The Mishnah at the end of tractate Rosh Hashanah describes the battle. Whenever Moshe raised his hands heavenward and directed the people's hearts towards G-d the Jews overpowered the enemy. If, however, Moshe dropped his hands the Amalekites started to win the battle. In effect, the armaments that the Jews carried out of Egypt were not the factor that determined their victory nor was it the men chosen by Yehoshua to fight the attackers. It was the people's trust in G-d that yielded success. Why did Moshe rush Yehoshua to draft soldiers? Again we see that although trust is the catalyst for success human effort is a requirement for that trust to bring results.

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt'l was asked if a businessman is permitted to buy hazard insurance. The question is that if the Almighty decides to burn a warehouse full of inventory and cause the business

a financial loss does a man have the right to undermine the intentions of G-d, so to speak? Rav Moshe ruled that not only is it permitted it is required. In all matters of business a person should do whatever is natural to bring about success - so long as one maintains Torah guidelines. Even though the work does not yield success - it is the will of G-d that does the job - one must still do things in a natural way.

The open miracles like the spiting of the sea and the daily heavenly food mann reveal the power and the kindness of G-d with which He runs His world. It is through these open miracles that one should learn that all human history -nationally or individually - are miraculous. Our trust in Him brings success to us.

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