

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

"Since they were chased out of Egypt and they were unable to delay, and also they did not make provisions for themselves." (Shemot 12:39)

On the day the Jewish people made the exodus from Egypt there was a hurried atmosphere in the air. They left without preparing food and water for the journey through the desert. Instead, when Moshe instructed them to depart they left at once. The dough they were preparing did not have enough time to rise and so they left civilization with some matzah and some water and not much more except faith in Hashem and his ability to provide and protect. The prophet Yirmiyahu (2:2) praises their faith. "I remember the kindness of your youth; the love of a bride; you followed after me into the desert a land without vegetation." The words of the prophet reveal that Hashem praised our loyalty to Him in our first hours as a free nation.

What was so special about their behavior? Would it be better to remain slaves and be subjected to the whims of a cruel ruler's decree? Were they not witness to a stream of awe inspiring miracles that devastated the power of Egypt and left in a humble wasteland where a glorious society once reigned supreme? No one would choose to stay in the land of their bondage so why would Hashem credit the people with special love and faith?

In the material world there is a great difference between knowing conceptually and doing something in practice. A person may study cookbooks yet never bake a cake or read a driver's manual and fail to practice behind the wheel of a car. Human endeavors that remain in conceptual terms are not the way to success. It is practice of what one learns that brings results.

The same is true in the spiritual realm. One may be inspired - one may study and learn but until a person puts his knowledge into practice all the facts that he has absorbed remain nebulous concepts that do not change him for the better. It is only after one's learning is tested in the world of action that he can benefit from what his mind perceives as beneficial.

Even after crossing through the Sea - and witnessing one of the clearest revelations of Hashem's power in history the maid servant who was inspired to say, "This is my G-d and I will beautify Him" still was a maidservant. She did not grow from the vision she was merely temporarily inspired. Similarly, with all that the Jews witnessed in the final year in Egypt - a year of miracles - they only grew in potential but not in actual spiritual accomplishment. When they followed Moshe's instructions and left Egypt so hurriedly as to leave without ample provisions they tested their faith

and developed it into a real demonstration of loyalty to our Creator. For this success of faith over logic G-d praised them

Everyone learns and everyone has potential for spiritual greatness. It is only through practice of G-d's commandments that we demonstrate our love for Him and His Torah. It is through our performance of His commandments that we actualize our potential and make it real growth towards perfection. Practice makes perfect.

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