

Va'eira- 2012

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Many times what we perceive in life as a “setback”, “disappointment”, or punishment turns out to be a blessing in disguise. This is so because we are finite human beings with limited foresight. Even the greatest of all human beings, Moshe Rabbeinu suffered from this shortcoming.

At the end of parshat Shemot, Moshe complained to HaShem that instead of helping the people, He had only made it worse for them. Now, in our parsha HaShem speaks harshly to Moshe [6:2, 3], comparing him to the Avot, who maintained their faith without complaint and in full confidence of what HaShem was doing. After rebuking Moshe, HaShem says to him, “And **now** you will see what I shall do to Par’oh”! [6:1]

What was this issue all about, that Moshe perceived the events as a setback while HaShem viewed this as a great step forward? Moshe and Aharon approach Par’oh with a request to for our people to leave Mitzrayim [5:1]. Par’oh is angered and orders the Egyptian taskmasters over the Jewish foreman not to provide straw for slaves to manufacture the bricks but let them go and gather the straw for themselves. But the quota of bricks that they were making in the past shall not be reduced [5:7], in other word. They shall just have to work harder.

When a slave is given all the equipment and materials all the work produced is mechanical and reflexive, there is no thinking or creativity required. However, now that they had to seek and find their own straw this jolted the slaves into utilizing their ingenuity and developing a thinking process. This is precisely what HaKadosh Baruch Hu wanted, to wean our people from a slave mentality unto a thinking independent human being. What Moshe saw as a setback and punishment turned out to be the necessary tools of thinking that would eventually enable our people to become an independent thinking nation.

Interestingly, the Gemara Menachot [29b] relates that when Moshe Rabbeinu ascended to the heaven he saw the G-d was involved in placing crowns on the letters of the Torah. Moshe asked why is that necessary? And HaShem answered that in a future generation there will be man, named Akiva ben Yosef, who will darshan and interpret every single crown and give it meaning. Moshe requested, “Show me this man”, and HaShem placed him in the Bet Midrash of Rabbi Akiva, seated at the end of the eighth row. Moshe felt uncomfortable, for he could not

comprehend the intricacies of the shiur, until Rabbi Akiva concluded with the statement, “all that I taught today comes from Halacha L’Moshe MiSinai”. It is this Rabbi Akiva who was frequently heard saying, [Berachot 60a], “Kol D’aveed Rachmana- Letav Avid, whatever the Ribbono Shel Olam does- is for our good”. This principle, which Rabbi Akiva understood, was not yet understood by Moshe Rabbeinu, Wow!