

“WHY DID THIS EVIL BEFALL THIS PEOPLE AND WHY DID YOU SEND ME?” (SHMOS 5:22)

MOSHE DID as Hashem had instructed him. He approached Pharaoh's palace and made his request for the freedom of the Jews. He was flatly refused. Pharaoh's only response was to increase the workload of the already overburdened Jewish slaves. Moshe empathized with his fellow Jews, and as their plight worsened, his pain intensified, reaching a point where it became unbearable. Moshe asked Hashem to explain the reason for their suffering.

**Moshe was criticized for requesting this explanation**

We find that Moshe was criticized for requesting this explanation. Moshe should have been able to accept Hashem's decree without having to know why. Rashi (ibid. 6:1) quotes the Gemora (Sanhedrin 111a) which contrasts this incident with the *akeidah* – the binding of Yitzchok. In that episode, Avraham was willing to sacrifice his only son with no questions asked. Moshe, likewise, should have carried out his duties without requesting an explanation (see Miz-rachi on Rashi ibid.).

**How does Moshe's situation compare?**

The Gemora's association between these incidents implies that the challenges for Avraham and Moshe were exactly the same. How does this episode compare to the *akeidah*? Avraham was asked to kill his only son, the embodiment of all his life's aspirations and the fulfillment of Hashem's blessings for the future Jewish Nation. Moshe, on the other hand, was distraught because other Jews were suffering at the hands of Pharaoh. How does Moshe's situation compare to Avraham Avinu's ultimate test?

One of the prerequisites for Jewish leadership is sensitivity to the pain of others. Just as a doctor who is oblivious to his patient's pain, even pain which is unavoidable and necessary to save the patient's life, is not a proper physician; so too, a leader who is not concerned with the suffering of his constituents is not a fitting leader. Moshe Rabbeinu was a leader par excellence. He cared for his charges to a remarkable degree. They were his children, and watching them suffer was as difficult for Moshe as sacrificing Yitzchok was for Avraham. Moshe was criticized for not reaching the incredibly lofty level of Avraham – who was able to accomplish his mission in spite of his tears, without requesting an explanation to make the pain easier to bear.

**This is the level of care to which a leader is expected to aspire**

Moshe's love and concern for the Jewish people reached a height that is difficult for us to comprehend. Merely seeing them in agony was an *akeidah* for him. This is the level of care to which a leader is expected to aspire. If we are responsible for others, if they are under our charge, then this obligation is also applicable: we must empathize with them and feel their troubles and distress. Moshe Rabbeinu's example teaches us that we must strive to instill within ourselves an awareness of the pain and misery of our charges and our Jewish brethren. We must strive to reflect this sensitivity in all our interactions with our fellow man.