

## They are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh... to take Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt; this was Moshe and Aharon. (6:27)

The Torah introduces the partnership of Moshe *Rabbeinu* and Aharon *HaKohen* as *Klal Yisrael's* designated leaders who were Divinely charged to lead the Jewish People from Egypt. It was through them that Pharaoh and his people were meted out the Ten Plagues. The Torah introduces them here with a genealogical backdrop, beginning with their great-grandfather, Levi, his children and grandchildren, culminating with Moshe and Aharon. This would have been sufficient. The Torah, however, adds, "This was Moshe and Aharon," which, on the surface, appears to be a superfluous statement. Of course, they are Moshe and Aharon. Who else? *Rashi* explains that the Torah is teaching us that they devotedly completed their mission and remained righteous from the very beginning all the way to the conclusion – *mitchilah v'ad sof*.

One might wonder concerning this accolade. Is one not supposed to follow through and complete his mission without abandonment? This is what successful completion means. Apparently, explains *Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl*, not all people are able to stick to it, to retain the same passion and fervor as when they commenced their mission, nor do they remain the same people. *Chazal (Berachos 29a)* teach that Yochanan served a *Kohen Gadol*, High Priest, for eighty years. For eight decades he remained on the apex of spiritual leadership. He was the role model for everyone and anyone who studied for spiritual success. After eighty years, however, rather than retire in success, he became an apostate! Unquestionably, he was a great man – one does not become enshrined in such a tenure, unless he is deserving of the accolade. Nonetheless, something happened to turn him off, and he did not persevere. He died as an apostate; he did not complete his mission.

Life is filled with pressures. How many graduate high school, enter *bais hamedrash* with grandiose plans for a successful, lengthy tenure – until something happens and their plans are derailed? We make choices: *Kollel*, *chinuch*, professional, business, and, at one point, we hit a bump in the road. We are not strong enough to overcome the challenge, or we are just looking for an excuse to get out, but the end result remains the same: we do not complete our mission. Our plans are foiled, because we did not – or were not able to – persevere.

The *Mashgiach* related that he, too, experienced such a bump in the road. It was called World War II, and he, being a German citizen, was compelled to leave Poland where he was studying in the *Mir Yeshivah* to spend the next eight years alone in Sweden. No *minyán* of *shomrei Shabbos*, no *chaburah*, group of students with whom to study. He was alone. Yet, he persevered and remained steadfastly committed during his years of exile in Sweden.

*Rav Wolbe* proudly describes a Moroccan Jew who (like so many others) was brought to a non-observant *kibbutz* – where *Shabbos* and *kashrus* had long been relegated to being relics of an ancient people. He refused to capitulate to their pressures. (They were anti-religious and probably guilt-ridden by his continued attachment to Jewish practice and observance.) He was moved to

another *kibbutz*, lest he inculcate others with his continued commitment to Jewish observance. After moving him around failed to dissuade him, they relented and reluctantly sent him to a *yeshivah*. He persevered to the end; he completed his mission.

We all have challenges in life. No one promised us a bed of roses to saunter happily through life. Some rise to the challenge; others falter; yet others fail dismally. "Our challenge," says the *Mashgiach*, "is to define our ideals and adhere to them, regardless of the situations in which we find ourselves."