



B'haalotcha



English version

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HUMBLE POWER

Here is the sequence of events discussed towards the end of our Parasha: The Jews complain to Moshe about their heaven-sent Mannah. They would rather have the natural produce from Egypt. They want meat. Moshe tells G-d, *“Kill me now; just don't punish Your people!... I can't carry the weight of this nation alone! I can never supply all the meat they want!... Even G-d can't supply all the meat they want!”*

How strange for Moshe to ask G-d, at this point, to kill him instead of punishing the Nation, something he asked of G-d only at the sin of the Golden Calf! Also, why was Moshe saying that he could not help the people? Wasn't he the 'superman' sent from G-d to bring on the 10 Plagues, take the Jews out of Egypt, split the sea, and bring the Torah down from the sky? Relative to these monumental achievements, bringing meat for the nation was not a miracle of such proportions that it would be hard for Moshe to ask it of G-d. And how strange for him to say that G-d can't supply the nation with meat!!!

G-d responds that He will take away part of Moshe's prophecy and give it to the seventy elders, so that they will have a share in prophecy. Moshe knows that 70 can't be divided by 12, and he wanted an equal number for all 12 Tribes. So, Moshe took 6 from each tribe and wrote on only 70 out of 72 notes the word “Elder”. Ironically, Eldad and Medad, the two that were left out from the 70, ended up receiving prophecy, and their prophecy was something that shook the whole Jewish Nation to the core: “Moshe will die, and Yehoshua will bring the Nation into the Land of Israel!”

The two reasons that we know why Moshe needed to die and not bring the people into E Yisrael, were the following: A. When he was first sent to Pharaoh, and as a result, things only got worse, Moshe questioned G-d *למה הרעות לעם הזה למה זה* (see Rashi, Shemot 6;1 and see Siftei Chachamim there) B. When Moshe struck the rock with his staff to get water, and lost the opportunity to bring about a higher level of Kiddush Hashem (Bamidbar 20;12). This prophecy of Moshe's death, at this point, seems so out of place. Why did it need to come out right after the Jews complained about the Mannah?

And one more episode, before the Parasha concludes. Miriam spoke to her brother Aharon about Moshe, regarding Moshe's separating from his wife, Tzipporah, and questioned if Moshe should be different from other prophets. Specifically at this point, the Torah says about Moshe, *וְהָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה עֲנִיּוּ מְאֹד מִכָּל־הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה*, *And the man Moshe was more humble than all the men that were on the face of the earth.* Moshe's humility is evident in so many places in the Torah. Why is it necessary to mention it at this specific place?

We opened with the complaining of the Jews. What were the Jews of the Desert complaining about? Such holy, wise, angelic men? They did not want to be so angelic!!! They did not want heaven-sent food, and to be so dependent on G-d! *After all, Moshe, I am here in the desert with a very large family, and the only food I can rely on is this Mannah! How irresponsible of me to be so dependent! In Egypt, I had normal food, natural food. I wasn't so dependent on G-d, so irresponsible toward my family.*

An assault on the Manna was an assault on Moshe, in whose merit we have the Manna. Moshe was the most humble of men, in the sense that no one views himself dependent on G-d to the same degree that Moshe did. Moshe can get them Manna, dependency, but he can't get them a feeling of security without G-d! Even G-d, no matter how much meat He would provide - if a person is looking for a feeling of security without G-d, there will never be enough. And, when someone wants security, when he wants to manage without G-d, G-d doesn't help him. Instead, G-d says, "If you want to manage on your own, go ahead and try".

This is why at this point, the prophecy came out that Moshe would need to die and would not bring Klal Yisrael into E Yisrael. Because this is the point where *the Nation* lost their merit of having Moshe, a Man of Miracles, as their leader. "If you want to manage without miracles, if you want to fight without feeling total dependence in G-d, Yehushua will have to take you in. Not Moshe." Moshe's needing to die was a catalyst for the next Parasha, the story of the Jews' fear when they heard from the Spies how they had no hope of being victorious over the 7 nations in a natural manner.

Recent studies have shown that the best CEO's are the most humble. For years, philosophers and psychologists frowned on 'humility', saying that it showed character weakness. This is because the concept 'humility' is often misunderstood. Humility is defined in the Miriam Webster Dictionary as a modest or low view of one's own importance. For this reason, people have a misconception about humility, thinking that it means to regard yourself as a 'shmatteh'. R' Shach would say that this cannot be what humility is, because how, then, would we understand Moshe's teaching this passuk of Torah to the whole nation, expounding on how he was, is and will always be the most humble person ever?!?

The Orchot Tzaddikim tell us, clearly, what humility is and how to achieve it. At its root, real humility is recognizing one's complete dependence on G-d and acknowledging that all the good you have is not because you deserve it, but because G-d, in His everlasting kindness, wanted you to have

it. The hardcore truth of humility is that we don't know where we are going in life, until we have one foot in the grave. We do not know if things will be better or worse, although we hope for the best, because we are totally dependent on G-d.

How humble you are, how undeserving you feel, or how dependent in G-d you feel, is evident from the way you respond when faced with disrespect. So many people feel like a Shmatteh when faced with insult, only because they feel that they *deserve* more respect, or they feel that they have importance, independent of G-d. They are just *surrendering* because they don't have any options, power, or courage to do anything about the given situation. That is being a Shmatteh; that is not being humble!

Of all people, Moshe felt the most obligated to G-d, the most underserving, the most dependent - and proof of it was revealed only now, when the closest person to him, his sister, Miriam, who saved his life, compared him to other prophets, and he did not respond, although he had the power to! Because he felt, "I do not deserve to be a prophet on a higher level than others; if G-d wants me to lose my level of prophecy, I will lose it, and the strengths that are G-d-given just make me more obligated to Him". This is how we can understand the sequence at the end of our Parasha.

We lost Moshe, because we did not want what he stood for! If we want miracles in life, we need to start feeling more dependent, more undeserving, and more obligated to G-d. G-d never forgets our original faith, our dependency in Him, following Him into the desert without any plan for survival. G-d remembered our Chessed with Him and did not annihilate us at the time of Exile in Yirmiyahu's days. פֶּה אֶמַר יְקוֹק זָכַרְתִּי לֵךְ יְחַסֵּד נְעוּרָיִךְ אֶהְבֵּת כְּלוּלְתֵּיךְ לְכַתֵּךְ אֶתְרִי בְּמִדְבָּר בְּאַרְזֵי לֹא יְרוּעָה (Yirmiyahu Ch. 2) He even refers to such faith as doing Chessed with G-d. What?! Does G-d need our Chessed?! Of course not! But if there is anything that we can do for G-d that even resembles chessed, it is to be dependent on Him, and on Him alone. (See Homat Anach from the Chida, *ibid.*)

YOLTO

Rebbi Shimon said, Why didn't G-d bring Mannah for the whole year at once? Why did G-d bring it in daily portions? It is similar to a king who would support his son by giving him all of his sustenance once a year. Then, the son visited his father only when there was something lacking. The king decided to give his son a daily ration, which caused the son to come visit daily. So, too, G-d wanted the Jews to turn their hearts to Him. He gave them their daily portion of Manna, so that each day, the Jew would wait, hopefully, to receive it, so that the family would not starve to death in the desert. This forced the Jew to pray. (Sifri)

This is a very Jewish concept. G-d does not need us to pray in order for him to solve our problems. Rather, He brought us problems because He wants our prayers. According to the Mayo clinic, close to half of hospital beds are occupied by people with real sicknesses that are results from worrying, stress, or other emotional causes (such as jealousy, not accepting reality, or not accepting one's self). People who cannot control their worrying die young. So, why did G-d create the emotion of worry, if its results are so severe? Because he wants us to pray. The human psyche is programmed in such a way that if a man cannot stop worrying, he can't survive: he needs prayer to stay sane. Without sincere prayer (and not just the lip service ritual), Man can go bananas. G-d does not need us to worry and stress, and He does not need us to solve our problems. He just wants us to realize how much we need Him.

Rabbi Shimon teaches us how to overcome worry. The Mannah was given to the generation that accepted the Torah. The Torah cannot be learnt by someone who is worried about Tomorrow. The On/Off switch for learning is Emotions and controlling them. If you cannot fight worry, you will never reach peak performance of study; you will not be able to focus. The Mannah was the ultimate lesson for all yeshiva students. If you want to stay in learning, you need to be able to ignore the future, leaving it up to G-d. So, how does one do it? By living in the Now.

Mordechai Ben David had a song I can never forget; I remember it clearly, from my youth. He got the words from the Ibn Ezra. העבר אין והעתיד עדיין וההווה כהרף עין. *The past is gone. The future has not yet come. And the present disappears in a blink. So, why worry?* In other words, all worry is from thoughts of the past or future. All bliss is in the Now. All worries boil down to either "Crying over spilt milk", or "Crossing your bridges before you reach them." Past and Future.

Take Yolo for example. Yolo is a new, delicious pudding/mousse in a variety of flavors you may find in the dairy refrigerator, in the supermarket, made by the Tnuva company. It is sweet, smooth, and expensive. It is not good for your diet. But, it tastes great. So, how does Tnuva convince you to buy it again and not worry about the calories, or that fat you will need to burn tomorrow when you restart your diet? When you open the cover of this mousse/pudding, there is another cover that says, "You only live once". Yolo stands for "you only live once", so you might as well enjoy life to the max.

That is a powerful statement. You only live once, and you have Today only once. People spend most of their lives living in the past, or living in the future, just not to live in the present and enjoy and be thankful for the Now. But, today is the tomorrow of yesterday, and by tomorrow, today will be just a memory. This concept of Now is the cornerstone of being the best Jew you can be. Being able to enjoy and be thankful for today. זה היום. עשה ה' נגילה ושמחה בו. You live today only once, so when are you going to thank G-d for today? When are you going to slow down in Birkot Hashachar and think about what you are saying? Worrying is the antonym of Tefillah. If a person were to pray sincerely, he wouldn't worry. This is why, according to the Abuhab, we stand with our feet together in prayer. It is not only to stand one-legged, as if we were angels. It is to relay the message that we are helpless, without G-d. We can't get anywhere without Him, and everywhere we've gotten until now, is with His help. What a humbling, empowering, thought.

The Mannah is the lesson that if you have food for today, you are okay. If you have a bed to sleep in for tonight, things will turn out all right. Why? Because just as G-d has taken care of you until now, he will take care of you Tomorrow. This is what Emunah means. Emunah is not just Faith. Emunah's root is Omen, a word that is used in this week's Parasha and which refers to a parent or caretaker who nurtures a helpless child. Jewish Faith is the belief that we need G-d for EVERYTHING, and He is involved in EVERYTHING. That is right. As much as it hurts the ego to feel that we are helpless without G-d, it is the most empowering thought, knowing that you have a G-d to pray to. This is a new reason to stay religious. Being irreligious has a very expensive price tag. It is called worry. Be religious, just so that you can have a G-d to help you manage.

So, just remember: YOLTO. You only live today once. Enjoy it. Make the best of it. Start praying. And stop worrying.

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