

When we read this parsha, we should look to see what Parshas Behaaloscha tells us about how to live our lives.

Those who were *tomei meis* did not want to be deprived of bringing the *korbon Pesach*. They were the ones who were carrying the coffin of Yosef. They were doing a *mitzvah* and didn't want to miss out on another *mitzvah*. Moshe responded that he would ask Hashem for guidance and would receive an answer.

How could Moshe be so confident?

*Nevuoh* is an incredible experience. Hashem is the King of Kings. He is the Creator of the universe and runs every detail of the universe. So while human beings have an infinite *neshomo*, they are still contained within bodies of flesh and blood.

The ability to communicate with Hashem and address Him is what every one of us does every day in *tefillah*. We say "Boruch Atoh Hashem." We mix the second person when we say "atoch" but then revert to the third person. We begin confronting Him directly. But on the other hand, Hashem is concealed from us. There is a measure of distance between Hashem and human beings which cannot be bridged no matter how great one is. We move to the third person.

Moshe Rabbeinu's level of *nevuoh* made him confident that Hashem would respond to him.

At the end of the parsha, we read that Hashem explained to Miriam and Aharon that they were mistaken regarding the level of Moshe Rabbeinu's *nevuoh*. They themselves were *nevi'im* on an unbelievably high level – we know that they were one of the few human beings who died with a *misas neshikoh*. This means that their bodies became so spiritualized that the separation of the *neshomo* from their body was natural and effortless – without any deterioration of the body.

Very few people in the history of the world achieved such a high level of spirituality. Yet even they could not communicate with Hashem while remaining conscious and in control of their physical body. *Nevuoh* is such an overwhelming experience that the body becomes lifeless and the *novi* goes into a trance – passively absorbing the *nevuoh*. The only person who ever reached the level of a back-and-forth communication with Hashem is Moshe Rabbeinu.

But more than that, Moshe Rabbeinu was able to initiate the *nevuoh* on his own! He didn't have to wait for Hashem to call to him to receive *nevuoh*. And still, while being aware that his *nevuoh* is so unique and he can initiate this back-and-forth communication with Hashem, Moshe is still the most humble human being who ever lived. He is the *eved Hashem*.

Having these two qualities – the highest form of *nevuoh* and unsurpassed humility – is precisely why Moshe Rabbeinu was chosen to convey the Torah from Hashem to the Jewish People. Other *nevi'im* like Yeshayahu and Yechezkel and Yirmiyahu had prophecies, but they couldn't remain standing. They went into a trance and received a vision. The communication was through images and parables. Only Moshe Rabbeinu received direct verbal communication of actual words. This level also meant that Moshe could initiate a meeting with Hashem.

It is the second year since *geulas Mitzrayim*. Klal Yisroel constructed the *mishkon* and they are all ready to travel and enter Eretz Yisroel. Everything was set up. They are on the move. They got over the sin of the golden calf, they had the *Shechinoh* dwelling in their midst, and

Hashem is eager to get them to Eretz Yisroel.

All of a sudden the parsha has brackets – two inverted nuns. They are a separation between what went before and the sudden unravelling that happened from here on. What went wrong?

First, there were *mis'onenim* – sections of Klal Yisroel were complaining. Rashi explains that they were struggling under the demands of the Torah and wanted to escape. Maintaining the incredibly high level of *hashroas haShechinoh* which they achieved at *kriyas Yam Suf* and Har Sinai required living up to a higher standard. These complainers were looking for an excuse to come down from the level they were expected to be on. Some people, when they realize that they really are capable of living on a higher level, but see that it is difficult, say "it's not for me."

The *Mesilas Yesharim* describes such a mentality. People makes excuses for compromising in *avodas Hashem* and say, "why do I have to push myself to reach the highest levels of Gan Eden? It's enough for me to get a decent portion and I will be happy with that." But the *Ramchal* asks: do these same people pass up an opportunity to advance themselves in this world – even though it will demand extra effort and sacrifice? Never. If you think you could be making millions in an investment instead of tens of thousands, you will work your head off to get it. No-one who is serious in business is satisfied with less than the maximum profit. Why should we be satisfied with less than the maximum in our *ruchniyus*?

Hashem told Klal Yisroel that He is making a special connection with them – if they just buckle down and make it into Eretz Yisroel with Moshe Rabbeinu leading them and not lose their momentum. Then *Moshiach* would come and it would be the final *geuloh*! But this group of people didn't appreciate the opportunity they were given. They didn't get the message. So Hashem got angry and punished them.

The next downfall in the parsha comes from the *eirev rav*. Throughout history, much of Klal Yisroel's troubles have come from the *eirev rav*. Who are they? What was their problem?

In Egypt, Klal Yisroel went through a purifying process of *golus Mitzrayim* – 83 years of hard, backbreaking labor. It was a constant uphill battle to maintain their identity and their *tznius* and their *emunoh* throughout all the difficulties. When the time came for them to leave, they were capable of being *moser nefesh* for *bris miloh* and *korbon Pesach* to renounce their Egyptian masters' culture. But, not all of them made it through this process. The Torah says Egypt was a smelting pot which purified the metal and removed the impurities. During *makkas choshech*, 80% of the Jews died. They didn't want to be purified. They didn't want to leave.

Those who did, fought hard and paid the price. All this made them ready to accept the absolute demands of the Torah and be elevated by those demands. But then there were Egyptians who saw everything being destroyed and saw how Hashem was taking out Klal Yisroel with *nissim* and *niflo'os*. They were so impressed and inspired that they wanted to leave Egypt and join Klal Yisroel. But they didn't go through any purifying process. They never made any sacrifices or paid any price. So the minute they realized that the demands of the Torah are hard, and living on an elevated level takes continuous sacrifice, their commitment started to sour. They weren't so inspired anymore.

The verse says they desired to have desire. They wanted to have a

normal human life and indulge without restrictions. The verse says they recalled the free fish they had in Egypt. Rashi explains they were referring to their previous free life. They want to go back to their previous lifestyle in Egypt without the restrictions of the Torah. It is simply a fact that you won't reach any level unless you learn to live within limits. You can't achieve real growth with total freedom. Someone who doesn't want to live within limits and bounds is not capable of spiritual growth.

They complained about the manna. But the manna could taste like – and had the properties of – any food you could want! How could they complain? Because the manna could be like any food except for five foods which were not healthy. They wanted to have those five foods. They couldn't tolerate any limitations. This is the undoing of the human being. Living without limits always leads to tragedy.

Chazal ask, where is Haman alluded to in the Torah? The answer is hamon ho'eitz – the eitz hadaas. We have manna, Haman, and hamon – the eitz hadaas. What is the connection between them all?

Haman had everyone in 127 provinces bowing down to him – all the honor you could dream about. But, one person, Mordechai, wouldn't bow. But Haman couldn't tolerate it. He says nothing I have – none of the wealth the honor, the sons, nothing is worth anything to me unless every single person bows down to me. Because of this inability to accept any limits, Haman destroyed himself and everything he had.

Similarly with Odom and Chava in Gan Eden. Hashem told them they could eat the fruit from all the trees in Gan Eden – except for one. They couldn't tolerate limitations and they had to eat it. So they were thrown out of Gan Eden and lost everything.

Here too, the manna could taste like any food you wanted – except for five things. They couldn't tolerate it. They couldn't live within any bounds.

The eirev rav weren't trained to do this. They never went through any purifying process of golus which 80% of Klal Yisroel couldn't make it through. They just jumped on the bandwagon and had everything served to them without effort and without sacrifice. So they couldn't live with the demand to stay within any limits.

Moshe Rabbeinu is exasperated. How is he supposed to bear this nation and give them all this meat they are demanding? Hashem responded that He has no limitations – no problem providing them with anything. He will give them meat until it's coming out of their nose. The problem is that they are rejecting the Shechinah in their midst. Rashi explains that if Hashem hadn't lifted them up to such a high level artificially, and they would have gone through the natural growth process, they would have been capable of accepting limits.

Hashem told Moshe to appoint a new Sanhedrin. The previous Sanhedrin had died. Why did they deserve to die? The end of Parshas Mishpotim describes how the Sanhedrin experienced an incredible prophetic vision and hashroas haShechinah, but they were busy feasting on food and drink. If this is what their leadership is doing, how can you expect Klal Yisroel not to learn from their example? Really, the Sanhedrin deserved to die then and there. But Hashem didn't want to disturb the simchah of maamad Har Sinai and waited for this moment.

This failure of Klal Yisroel to appreciate the manna and appreciate the elevated level that they were living on, is the appropriate time to punish the Sanhedrin teaching this kind of behavior which led to Klal Yisroel's downfall.

Hashem brought the quail, they ate the meat, and many died. Moshe Rabbeinu davened for them and they were forgiven.

This story tells us a simple message. Everyone is given opportunities to elevate themselves and live on a higher level – to connect to Hashem in a more serious way. Some people take advantage of that opportunity. But some people fight that opportunity. They don't appreciate how precious it is.

Another lesson is that growth and spiritual achievements that last requires living within limitations. You can't have the best of all worlds. You have to give up some things in order to accomplish other things that are more important and valuable in life. A person who wants to excel in any area of life needs to make a total commitment – to invest time and effort and a willingness to sacrifice all kinds of conveniences and comforts. The eirev rav weren't willing to sacrifice to live a life on the highest level conceivable. They didn't appreciate what it means to have a leader like Moshe Rabbeinu who can initiate an audience with Hashem Himself! Some people just don't get the message, and worse than that, they bring down the rest of Klal Yisroel with them.

Klal Yisroel were about to start the last leg of their journey to reach Eretz Yisroel – Hashem was anxious to get them there already without delay and the final geulah would arrive! All of a sudden there are brackets and everything starts to unravel. This generation will die in the desert.

You can't have everything. You have to live with limitations. If you aren't capable of accepting limitations, you will lose everything. People make sacrifices for all kinds of things in life that they feel are important. If you really want something, you will give up on many things to get it.

Hashem told Shlomo Hamelech that he could ask Hashem for only one thing and it will be granted – he couldn't ask for everything. It meant that he had to choose what was most important and give up on everything else. Shlomo Hamelech chose wisdom, and Hashem responded that because he was willing to sacrifice everything for wisdom, He will give him everything in addition.

Klal Yisroel had the most incredible opportunity at that point, and the eirev rav who didn't pay any price, pulled them down. If people had stopped and paid attention to what happened earlier in the parsha – that Moshe Rabbeinu was on the level where he could ask Hashem for a nevuah and communicate with Him anytime he wanted, they would have realized who their leader was and what a zechus they had. Perhaps Klal Yisroel would have phrased their requests differently. They wouldn't have complained as they did and they could have made it to Eretz Yisroel.

It is a very important parsha which reveals deep realities about human behavior. It should make us think about how we should approach the opportunities we are given, and understand that growth in ruchniyus requires sacrifice and living with limitations.