

# INSIGHTS

## Into The Weekly Parsha

בס"ד

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This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Selma Daniels,  
Sora Bas Avraham. "May her Neshama have an Aliya!"

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16 SIVAN

Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

PARSHAS BEHA'ALOSCHA

## When a Symptom Becomes a Cause

*And the people became as complainers, (speaking) evil in the ears of HaShem... (11: 1)*

Rashi (ad loc) explains that the word "misoninim" means those who seek a pretext to complain; Bnei Yisroel were looking for a way to distance themselves from HaShem. Rashi goes on to explain that they were complaining about their arduous journey – "we have traveled three days without a respite!" Yet, previously (10: 33) Rashi explains that they completed a three day journey in a single day because HaShem wanted to bring them into Eretz Yisroel immediately. If so, why were they complaining?

Chazal (cited by Ramban on 10: 35) teach us that Bnei Yisroel left Mount Sinai like "a child running away from school." Chazal are referring to the feeling of relief following the removal of responsibility that a school child feels when he hears that final school bell on the last day of school. He doesn't simply leave, he literally "runs away" from school. In other words, Bnei Yisroel were running away from HaShem and the *mitzvos*. As Ramban (ibid.) explains, they ran away "lest we receive more commandments."

Most fights that people engage in, especially when it comes to family issues, have little or nothing to do with the actual reason for the fight. Nearly all interpersonal issues stem from control issues. Couples may fight over religious observance, the spouse's family, their children's education, or other seemingly "righteous" arguments. But in reality they are merely looking for a pretext to express their displeasure with the other person. The argument is merely the vehicle to articulate feelings of resentment.

The quintessential example of this is Korach. He made many religious and seemingly righteous arguments against Moshe and Aharon. Korach was a first rate *Talmid Chacham* and was able to channel his resentment into *halachic* disagreements with Moshe and Aharon. In fact, he was able to convince many people to side with him. But, in reality, he was just jealous that he was overlooked for the position of Kohen Gadol. His arguments were merely a pretext to pick a fight; which is why the Mishna in *Avos* calls it a *machlokes* that was not for the sake of heaven.

This further explains what Rashi means by "they were looking to distance themselves from HaShem." Their real issue had nothing to do with the journey; for we know that a three day journey only took one day. This of course was a great kindness from the Almighty, but as they were looking for a pretext to throw off the yoke of responsibility to HaShem, they used the three day journey as an excuse for a fight. The complaining wasn't because of a justifiable cause, it was only a symptom of the real issue – their resentment of being told what to do.



## Did You Know...

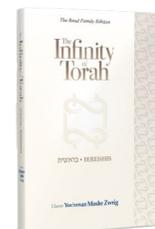
In this week's *parsha*, Bnei Yisroel complain to Hashem about the lack of meat, though they had plenty of *manna* (and paradoxically plenty of their own sheep and cattle that they could have slaughtered). Needless to say, Hashem became very angry and replied that they will receive meat, lots of it, and they will eat so much that it'll make them sick. Sure enough, a wind started blowing, sweeping quail up from over the sea, towards the camp. The people went out and gathered on that day, the night, and the next day to stuff themselves with the birds. Hashem struck these greedy people with a severe plague, and the people died with the meat still between their teeth. Here are some of the more interesting facts about this incident:

1. These birds are identified as quail, specifically *coturnix coturnix* – the common quail. These birds are the smallest of the quail family, and are particularly abundant in the Red Sea during the migratory season (*Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan 11:31*). →

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# Great Enough to be Humble

***Mouth to mouth I speak to him, in a vision and not in riddles, and he gazes at the image of Hashem. Why did you not fear to speak about My servant Moshe? (12:8)***

This week's *parsha* ends with the remarkable incident of Miriam inadvertently speaking *loshon hora* about Moshe Rabbeinu. As Rambam explains (*Hilchos Tumas Tzoraas* 16:10): "Consider what happened to Miriam who was older than Moshe, raised him on her knee and risked her life for him, and did not intend to speak negatively about Moshe, for she only erred in comparing him to all the other prophets. In addition, Moshe took no offense to what she said because, as the verse attests, 'The man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth (Bamidbar 12:3).' Even so, she was immediately afflicted with leprosy."

The Torah states outright that Moshe was the most modest person alive. Yet, Moshe clearly knew his greatness (one can only imagine his reaction when Hashem asked him to write the words "exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth"), after all, he was chosen to lead the Jews out of Egypt and bring about the most wondrous miracles. Then, Hashem designated him at Mount Sinai above everyone else. Finally, Moshe was undoubtedly aware that his prophecy was on a higher plane than any other prophet – before or since.

Obviously, Moshe was aware that he had accomplished more than anyone else; how is it possible that he was the most modest person on the face of the earth? One might think that a person can maintain an attitude of modesty if one focuses on their unfulfilled potential. But, clearly, Moshe Rabbeinu couldn't beat himself up for not accomplishing more in his life. So how did he maintain his modesty? Perhaps more importantly, how are we to incorporate this crucial character trait into our own lives?

In defending Moshe to the implied criticism of Miriam, Hashem says "Mouth to mouth I speak to him, in a vision and not in riddles, and he gazes at the image of Hashem. Why did you not fear to speak about My servant Moshe?" (12:8). The word "gazes" is a translation of the Hebrew word "yabit." Throughout the Torah we find several different words for seeing or looking. Rashi (*Bereishis* 15:5) says that when the Torah uses this word it means to look down (from up above).

Yet the word "yabit" in this context is difficult to understand; how can Hashem defend Moshe by saying that Moshe looked down from up high "at the image of Hashem"? What does that even mean?

Hashem was telling Miriam something

remarkable about Moshe Rabbeinu. Even though Moshe had the most incredible relationship with Hashem, more than any human has ever had or will have, and this really did place him on a very high level, when he looked down at everyone else he saw the image of Hashem within them. In other words, everyone is created by Hashem for a specific purpose and that makes them unique. Therefore, each person has qualities that are uniquely their own.

Moshe was able to sense the unique quality of each individual, and understand that each person had something that he did not have; something that he could learn from him or her. This is how he maintained his modesty. Of course, the lesson for the rest of us isn't that we should merely respect others because they probably have something we don't have. Quite the opposite. We must look at others to understand what we can learn from them. As Chazal say in *Pirkei Avos* (4:1) "Who is a wise man? The one who learns from all men." The only way to possibly do that is to focus on the fact that each person can teach us something. When we do that, and internalize all that we can learn from others, we will remain modest.

## Did You Know Continued

2. There were so many of these small quail that they surrounded the camp in huge amounts, piled three feet from the ground so a person didn't even need to bend to get them. Some people even walked a distance of 34 miles to collect the quail (ibid).
3. There was so much meat that even the people who gathered the least had around 1000 pounds of meat (ibid).

4. From this incident we learn the *halacha* that meat retains its status when it's between the teeth; therefore one must wait six hours between meat and dairy (*Chullin* 105a).
5. The Gemara says that not everyone died right away. The average person died immediately, but the wicked suffered continuously for a month, and then died (*Yoma* 75b).
6. The Gemara continues and notes that this bird is so fatty that when it's placed in an oven, it expands and fills

the oven. It's then placed over thirteen loaves of bread and is so fatty that even the bottom loaf can only be eaten with a mixture of other foods (ibid).

7. In the time of the Gemara, quail was a staple of the diet of the sages. For example, Rabbi Yehuda would find them by his barrels and Rabbi Chieffs would find them by his trees. They were divinely sent to these locations so that the *chachamim* would savor their delightful taste (*Me'em Lo'ez Behaloscha* 13).



4000 Alton Road  
Miami Beach, FL 33140

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