

"And in the morning you will see the glory of Hashem, as He listens to the complaints against Hashem, and what are we that you should incite complaints against us?" (16:7)

The *Talmud* in *Chullin 89* notes that Moshe's and Aharon's level of humility surpasses even that of Avraham Avinu. The Patriarch compared himself to lowly dust (rptu rpg hfbtu), while Moshe and Aharon claimed they were nothing (vn ubjbu). This motivated Rava to declare that the world is sustained only in the merit of Moshe's and Aharon's humility, as it is stated, vnhkc kg .rt vk,, "*He hangs the earth on nothing (Iyov 26:7)*. This refers to vn ubjb, "What are we?" the words with which Moshe and Aharon described themselves.

Chazal apparently imply that Moshe's and Aharon's statement was an expression of humility. This is, however, not consistent with the text that suggests that they were actually placing the "blame" for the lack of material sustenance on Hashem. If this was not really an idiom of humility, then they were in fact accusing Hashem of not providing for *Bnei Yisrael!*

Horav Elyakim Schlesinger, Shlita, offers a novel exposition of the *pasuk*. He cites *Sifrei Kaballah*, which opine that the manner in which Hashem provides material sustenance to the world is in accordance with the spiritual power of the *tzaddikim* of a given generation. He cites the *Arvei Nachal* who concludes that Moshe had to appoint the seventy *zekeinim*, elders, in order to change the *hashpaah*, spiritual influence, by which *Klal Yisrael* were sustained in the desert. Because Moshe's level was so lofty, *Klal Yisrael* were assigned to eat "heavenly bread." With the introduction of the *zekeinim*, they would have the means to receive a simple, materialistic form of sustenance -- meat.

We may wonder why *Klal Yisrael* had the audacity to criticize Moshe and Aharon for taking them out of Egypt. Did they not take notice of the amazing miracles and wonders that only Hashem could have wrought in Egypt and at the Red Sea? Was it not obvious that Moshe and Aharon were simply executing Hashem's directive? Applying the above thesis, *Horav Schlesinger* suggests that their complaint was of an entirely different nature. *Klal Yisrael* desired a form of sustenance that was **not** spiritual in nature. They wanted to eat meat like everyone else.

Moshe and Aharon were the *manhigei ha'dor*, the leaders of the generation. Since these two individuals were unparalleled in their spiritual ascendancy, the form of sustenance enjoyed by the people was spiritual, rather than material. Moshe and Aharon responded to this criticism in all humility, by disclaiming any spiritual superiority which would warrant such a unique form of sustenance. Humility expressed in such words as, "What are we?" is what sustains the world. Indeed, those *tzaddikim* who view themselves as unworthy and undeserving serve as the foundation upon which the world rests.

Horav Schlesinger recounts a remarkable conversation he had with the *Chazon Ish, z.l.* He asked

the *Chazon Ish* whether he was aware that he was the *gadol ha'dor*, leading *Torah* personality and scholar of the generation. When the *Chazon Ish* begrudgingly responded in the affirmative, he questioned the reason for his outstanding humility. The *Chazon Ish* replied, "I know that if others would be granted my talents and be privy to the conditions under which I was able to develop, they would truly have been great people." This short rejoinder characterizes the essence of the *Pe'er Ha'dor*, the *Chazon Ish*.