

And Bnei Yisrael also wept once more and said, “Who will feed us meat?” (11:5)

People are shaped by their desires and cravings, which, in turn, influence their choices and actions. Desires often stem from personal experiences, values and external influences. What a person craves reflects his priorities and character, as well as his pursuit of fulfillment in various aspects of life. In other words, a nation that had graduated from two centuries of slavery to be liberated to stand at *Har Sinai*, experiencing the greatest Divine Revelation during which they received the Torah, should not get bent out of shape over a lack of meat. *Mi yaachileinu basar*, “Who will feed us meat?” is a demand far below what is expected of a G-dly nation. To complain about the fish they were fed in Egypt – and the vegetables that accompanied it – is to add insult to injury. All of this is while they were receiving a daily portion of Manna that had the taste of anything they imagined. [There is a difference between enjoying good food and living to enjoy it. It is an indication of one’s priorities.]

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl, relates the following *mashal*, parable, which was often reiterated in Novoradok *Yeshivah* circles. A *yeshivah bachur* gets on a wagon which will take him from his home to *yeshivah*. He is very much looking forward to the upcoming *z’man*, semester, and the opportunity for growth in learning. His traveling “companions” are: the wagon driver, whose mind is on the fare he will collect from the *bachur* once he drops him off at the *yeshivah*; and the horse that is the engine pulling the wagon, who has his mind focused on the hay he will receive at the end of the trip. He dreads being whipped by the driver, so he is careful to move at a steady speed.

We see from here that the higher one’s station in life, the more elevated are his thoughts (or, at least, they should be). Someone who spends his day learning will focus more on spiritual success than where he will go for dinner. One whose primary focus is earning a comfortable living will do just that. He will also see to it that he spend his free time devoted to spiritual pursuits.

The *Maggid* notes that the world’s first *mussar shmuess*, ethical discourse, was delivered by Hashem to Adam *HaRishon*: *Ayeca?* “Where are you?” (*Bereishis* 3:9). Following Adam’s eating of the *Eitz HaDaas*, Tree of Knowledge, he hid from Hashem. He knew that he had acted wrongly and was hoping to avert punishment. Hashem said to him, “Where are you?” Obviously, Hashem knew where Adam was; rather, He wanted to impart to him an important lesson: “Yesterday, you were in accord with My wishes. Today, you are no longer with Me, but, instead with the serpent. Your status has dropped considerably as a result of your sin. Hashem intimated this by the word, *ayeca*. A question he has asked of all of us – it is one which we personally should often ask ourselves. In other words: Does our behavior coincide with our thoughts? Are we thinking about the next *shiur* or the next restaurant? Do our favorite pastimes become our fulltime? Is life about achieving spiritual elevation or about taking a bite out of an apple? *Ayeca?*”

This is why Moshe *Rabbeinu* was angry and considered the Jewish People’s request evil. After

receiving the Torah, one's concern should be for something more than, "Who will feed us meat?" When they talked about the fish, leeks, onions and garlic that they had in Egypt – they were demeaning themselves. What we express is really our hearts desire.

Clearly, Moshe *Rabbeinu's* aspirations for *Klal Yisrael*, his goals for them, were not in consonance with their personal objectives. He became angry with them because he expected that a nation which had experienced *Matan Torah* would act differently, would have higher goals. He saw now that their spiritual progress was not aligned with his expectations of them. Were they that low, was he expecting too much of them? Moshe was the quintessential leader of our people, and, as such, was acutely attuned to the psyche of *Klal Yisrael*. He was well aware that each and every Jew has a *neshamah tehorah*, pure soul, which only needs to be ignited. Once the spark is fanned, the flame will rise of its own volition. If it does not, it is because it was extinguished. The people were fighting their will to spiritually elevate. They wanted to remain on the level of "Who will feed us meat?" It was easier, much less demanding. They knew the proper road to take. They just wanted to veer off the road. This is why Moshe was so angry.

This is why Moshe's response to the people was not an immediate delivery of meat boards to satisfy their fancy. He first gathered *shivim zekeinim*, seventy elders, so that his spirit would inspire them. They, in turn, would spiritually invigorate the masses. The people's desire for more *gashmius*, material/physical satisfaction, was the result of a deficiency in their spiritual level.

As a postscript, I think that one word defines the egregious nature of the nation's demand for meat and provides reason for Moshe's agitation. *Va'yivku*, and they wept. It is one thing to ask for meat; it is not the end of the world if one craves a piece of meat, but to cry for it – this is a new low. One cries out of pain or joy, but not for a piece of meat. Their reaction was totally without logic and character. We do not cry for a piece of meat.