



AVOID THE DESPAIR & SEE YOUR FULL POTENTIAL



CRYING FOR A CRAVING

In this week's parsha, we encounter several challenges that Klal Yisrael faced. It is important for us to understand these challenges, because they reveal the source of certain struggles within the nation. Some of those challenges came from the influence of the *Erev Rav*.

The Jewish nation picked up many people from the *Erev Rav*, who brought out a series of challenges for Klal Yisrael. And these challenges must be studied and understood. One of the challenges was, as it says in the *pasuk*, והאספסוף אשר בקרבם, "The riffraff in their midst felt a gluttonous craving" (Bamidbar 11:4).

The *Asafsouf* were the people they picked up who weren't sourced from Klal Yisrael. *Rashi* says they joined them when they left Mitzrayim.¹ So they came and they instigated Klal Yisrael to desire a craving. Now, this is amazing to me. They were living off of the *mahn*, this heavenly food, and they managed to motivate the Bnei Yisrael and themselves to express a desire for meat, for *basar*. Cowboy steaks. They wanted the real thing. It's amazing to me. And the *pasuk* says, *vayivku*, and they cried, ויבכו גם בני ישראל ויאמרו מי יאכלנו בשר, "And also Bnei Yisrael wept and said, 'Who will feed us meat?'"

Who's that? *Gam Bnei Yisrael*. It says *Gam Bnei Yisrael* cried together with them. And they wanted to know: *mi yachileinu basar*. This is *mamish* amazing.

But you have to know that human beings have an innate desire. You hear about some people who desire certain types of meat. Like to go to reserve cut or fancy places in America, what's that place called? Salt. I don't know why they call it Salt, it's a lot more than salt there.

And Tomahawk. All these fancy names. And in Eretz Yisroel, each place is fancier than the next. But many times I've thought about this: is it a normal thing or is it a *goyishe* thing? And the *emes* is, you see such a thing in the Torah.

A *poshut Vayoshuvu Bnei Yisroel* changed to *Vayivku*. I *mamash* can't get over this. I can't imagine crying over lack of meat!

If I was starving, I could understand that. So you cry because you're hungry. But to cry over a steak, to cry over some fancy shmancy cut of meat, is very hard to imagine. Could you imagine that? I remember that a number of years ago, I was at some place, and a guy told me that if you're in that place, you have to go into a certain eatery.

So I went in there and I said, "What's the famous thing that everybody buys here?" "Something that costs a hundred dollars a portion." I said, "Is it worth it?" He said, "It's worth it." I said, "Why is it worth it?" "Because you don't have to order anything else. Anything else we have, you have to order, you know, you have to order before, you have to order stuff with it. If you just buy this, you're set." And every time I come face to face with such a situation, I think about this.

Boruch Hashem, I haven't yet met anybody who was crying over their steak or their ribs or the like. You have to know that this is part of the challenge that a Yid has. Now the most interesting thing about this challenge is that it doesn't seem like it is the biggest challenge. There are ways to deal with it.

But when Moshe Rabbeinu was facing this challenge, he *plotzed*. He *poshut* came to Hashem and said, "Hashem, did I give birth to this nation that they think I can give them meat? What do they think I am? I'm their mother? I'm their nanny? What am I? *Me'ayin li bosor*? Where do I have *bosor* to give all this whole *am*? And they're *poshut* crying to me, *tenu lonu bosor*, give us *bosor*."

Moshe Rabbeinu said, "I can't handle this." לא אוכל אנכי לבדי לשאת את כל העם הזה. "I can't bear this nation alone anymore. I can't be the ruler, the only ruler over such a nation. *Ki kaved mimeni*. It's too difficult for me." Then he goes on and says a very strange thing.

ואם נכה אתה עשה לי, "If this is what you're going to put on me, that I have to deal with this challenge, *hargeini na harog*, kill me now." *Na* doesn't mean "please" in this situation. Not "please kill me," *hargeini na*, "now." You hear that? I *mamash* can't get over this.

אם מצאתי חן בעיניך ואל אראה ברעתי. "I don't want to see the *tzara* that I'm facing." And then Hashem says, "Okay, we're going to

¹ והאספסוף. אלו ערב רב שנאספו עליהם בצאתם ממצרים.

appoint a leadership of 70 elders” of Klal Yisrael. So my Zayde pointed out that *lechora* the *Cheit Ha'eigel* was much worse than this thing, ‘Where’s the beef?’ ‘Where’s the *fleish*?’ *Efo habasar? Basar.*

WHY WAS THIS CHEIT DIFFERENT FROM THE EIGEL

The *Eigel* was a much bigger challenge. And Moshe Rabbeinu didn’t say over there, *ki kaved mimeni*. So what was it about this specific *cheit* that triggered Moshe Rabbeinu to say, “That’s enough”? *כי כבד הוא ממני*, “it’s too hard for me.” Do you have a question from here? Do you have a *teretz*? You have a thought? Why was it bigger than the *Eigel*? What drove him so crazy over here?

So the Zayde said, I think he was saying it from his *rebbe*, Rav Isaac Sher, that surely the *Eigel* was a much bigger *aveira*. But in spite of the sin of the *Eigel*, Klal Yisrael still retained something and there was who to work with. And Moshe Rabbeinu felt they still retained the *koach* to start over again, to rebuild them, to remake them. But over here he felt there was something that made him call it quits. There was no one to work with anymore. And then everything was lost. But the question is, why did he think like that? What behavior did they exhibit that made Moshe Rabbeinu believe that the situation of Klal Yisrael was hopeless? The *pasuk* says they were *misonenim*. In their inner *kishkes*, there was a bitterness, there was a *ye’ush*.

They lost their *simcha*, they lost their *chiyus*. If a person does or wants to do an *aveira* but he has feelings, pangs of guilt within him, and he still feels like he’s a *Yid* and he’s not hopeless, then there’s hope for him. And even if he does a big *aveira*, there’s hope. But when a person *poshut* becomes broken and convinces himself that his life is *poshut* terrible, his life is not worth it, everything they came out of *Mitzrayim* for was not worth it, it was *mamash* hopeless, if you don’t have *basar*, then it’s *mamash gefערליך*.

So you’re taking it to a level that’s very, very extreme. Moshe Rabbeinu said that with a depressed, broken nation, there’s no one to work with. As long as they retain some *simcha* in what they’re doing, so they want extras, they want extras! Then when they fall into a *cheit, nu*, there’s still hope. But when they give up and become in essence a complainer, Moshe says, “that’s *kaved mimeni*.”

You know, there are many people like that. We see children, I’ve seen adults, who express complaints about their life. That’s also a natural thing. People complain about their situation.

That’s how people are. Some people will tell you, “Life’s terrible, life is *mamash gefערליך*.” But let’s say, *l’mashal*, that a kid comes home to his mother and says, he wants to go to camp, he wants to go on a trip, he wants to go to this place, to that place. He said that everybody’s going, everybody’s having fun and his life is worthless if he doesn’t go.

And he starts to tell his mother how his life is not worth living, “I don’t know why we live in this place, why was I born into this family?” And the kid goes on and on and on. And the mother and father think, “What’s going on here? I understand you want to have some fun, but why are you making it sound like, you know, you’re *פשוט א שבר כל* and *an ois mentch*?” If a kid’s crying and complaining, he wants to go on a trip, okay, good. Let’s help him.

Sometimes a person comes to a position where he feels that his life is hopeless and not worth living if he can’t get a certain job. Some people have their eyes and dreams about jobs. And it’s not *basar*, it’s *parnasa*, and they want to have good *parnasa*. And people want something and if they don’t get it, their life is not worth living. Most other people say, no, my life is worth living.

But how am I going to pay for camp? How am I going to buy all my kids clothing for next year? There’s an answer for it: The same way you did it the year before when the situation was worse.

I was just involved with a person right now who lost his job. Not an uncommon phenomenon. This job for this person was his lifeline. It was his lifeline. For a while he struggled, and then got this position. He learned things in this position, he developed this position, he built up this position. And then Hashem orchestrated *bederech lo derech*, in a very unusual way, that he should get the big D.

He called me up, and understandably he was down. And I tried to give him *chizuk* and I told him, “You know, it’s not over. It’s not over.” At the very same time, this fellow needed a place to live, he was thrown out of his house, and was under great pressure to find a place.

I told him, “I have no doubt that Hashem loves you, and I have no doubt that Hashem is going to give you something better.” And he said that it seemed like Hashem has a funny way of showing His love. I said, “You never were that smart of a genius, and Hashem’s smarter than you, He knows how to show His love better than you know.” And he called me up a little while later, that the company where he worked was willing to give him a goodbye present, a severance pay for working for them.

A nice hefty severance pay. But the severance pay package was going to come with *tnoyim*. That you can’t take your knowledge that you know and work in another company. And I told him, “the knowledge that you have is very valuable. And you don’t want to give that up. I think Hashem prepared you with this knowledge for a nice cushy job.” He said,

"Maybe I should go into some other field." I said, "What? Hashem prepared you for this field. Do not sign the severance package." He said, "But I have no other job. If I go past a certain date, and don't sign the papers, I won't get it. And if I sign it, I will get it. But if I sign it, I'll become a prisoner to them, I won't be able to talk or use that knowledge." Imagine a guy caught in such a quandary?! I told him, "I understand your predicament. If I were you, I would not sign the papers. It's a test. Wait until the last minute." I spoke to him last week, again, as it was getting closer to the deadline. He said, "What should I do?" I said, ישועת השם כהרף עין. And I mean it. I'm telling you, reach out, put out some feelers there." And he called me this morning. I was getting my box of tissues ready to feel with him and share his *tzarah*, and he called, telling me, "I'm calling you for a happy occasion."

I was in the middle of a meeting when he called me, and I told him, "Sorry, I can't talk to you right now." "No, no, I have a happy occasion," he said. "Happy occasion? I'm always ready to hear about that." He said, "Yesterday I found out that a major company wants my service. They want me so badly that they wanted to make sure that I don't go out and go somewhere else, and to show me that they are serious, they pulled out \$10,000 and said, 'This is just to whet your appetite. But this has nothing to do with the real salary, this is just an ice cream, take-home, take-home ice cream. And today we're going to sign the contract right away.'"

If he had done otherwise and signed the severance package, he would not have had this new job. Hashem saved his life at the last second. I told him, "Does Hashem love you?" He said, "Absolutely."

He said, "I was driving home last night from that company and I was saying, '*Ribbono shel olam*, Hashem does love me, Hashem does love me.'" I said, "I knew that. And He's going to find you a house now also." And on top of that, do you know what the company said? I can't believe this.

The company said, "Did you ever sign on the severance pay?" I said, "No, I didn't want to. If I do that, I'm going to be locked out." "We'll take care of that too." Can you imagine that? "We'll give you the severance pay."

I said, "Is there Hashem in the world? Do you have any *safek* about getting a house?" I told him the second he was kicked out of his house, "Hashem's going to give it to you. But it's not going to come easy. Hashem's going to hold your feet to the fire until the last minute."

RECOGNIZE YOUR OWN KOCHOS

And you have to say, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu, I know You're taking care of me." And Moshe Rabbeinu came along and said "I cannot carry this whole nation," לא אוכל אנכי לבדי לשאת את כל העם הזה. So the *Ohr HaChaim* says an amazing thing (Bamidbar 11:15). *Ohr HaChaim* says: was Moshe Rabbeinu refusing Hashem's job? Was he saying to Hashem, "I quit, I can't take these conditions. The work conditions, the people I have to work with, it's באו מים עד נפש and I'm out of here"? That's what many people say. No, he says *chas v'shalom* to say that Moshe Rabbeinu is saying that. What Moshe Rabbeinu was saying is, "If it came to such a *matzav* where the Yidden felt so low, that's something that I really can't handle. It's not possible for me to do it, it's above my pay grade. I cannot handle such a job. And I understand Hashem, if you want, please kill me now. If I find favor in your eyes."²

It means Moshe Rabbeinu had to do a self-analysis, and he came to the conclusion that it's not possible for him to continue. This wasn't a threat, to continue working in this situation. And what did he mean when he said, "Kill me"? So the *Ohr HaChaim* says a very interesting thing. He says Moshe was saying, "Hashem, I'm afraid that You're going to tell me that I have to work anyway," *be'al korchecha*, "you have to work against your will." *Nu*, it means, על מנת כן יעבוד, work for Me until the *yetzias haneshamah* like it says *bechol nafshecha*.

Yes, be willing to give your life up for the job. And Moshe said, "Hashem, I'm ready now to give You my life. What You want from me is *mesirus nefesh, hineni muchan u'mezuman* to give You my *nefesh*. Moshe Rabbeinu, the greatest of all prophets, Ish HaElokim, whom the Giver of the Torah testifies about that he doesn't have the *kochos* to bear this great burden called Klal Yisrael alone. *Nu*, and there's no *safek* about it that he made the right *cheshbon*. But still and all, you find in the Medrash that it was a *tvia* on Moshe Rabbeinu. And if the Medrash did not say that there was a *tvia*, a complaint lodged against Moshe Rabbeinu, we would never say it.

And this is what the Medrash says: *L'ma hadavar domeh?*³ To what can this matter be compared? There was a *melech*, a king, that had an orchard, and he hired a *shomer* and paid him his wages. Afterwards, the *shomer* tells the *melech*, "I can't watch this whole orchard by myself. I need other people to assist me." The *melech* said, "I gave you the entire orchard to watch, and I expected you to do the job. And now you're coming and telling me to bring other people to watch with you? *Nu*, I'm going to bring others who are going to watch with you. And you should know, I'm not going to give them wages from my

² ואם ככה את עשה לי וגו'. פרוש, חש כי יאמר ה' אליו לשאת בעל כרחו. הגם שלא יוכל, על מנת כן יעבד ה' עד יציאת נשמה, דכתיב (דברים ו:ו) "בכל נפשך". לזה אמר ואם וגו' הרגני נא, פרוש, עתה מסר נפשו ולא ישא עוד המשא לבדו. ונתן הטעם ואל אראה ברעתי, פרוש, דבר הגורם רע לנפש שעליו יקפידו הצדיקים. והרעה אשר עליה צעק לבו היא שאם יהרגוהו ישראל יתחייבו כליה ונמצא שגמרם לו להענישם. גם לזה יחשב תחלואי הנפש, על דרך מאמר (משלי יז:כו) "גם ענוש לצדיק" וגו'. וכפל לומר הרגני נא הרג, לומר שהרג הוא אם לא יהרגוהו, כי ודאי שיהרגוהו ישראל, ואם כן כשה' הורג אותו אינו הורג אלא אדם הרג, גברא קטילא קטיל, ותיבת "הרג" נדרשת בנקוד שורוק. ורז"ל אמרו (ליקוט במדבר תשל"ה; מדרש תהלים כג) וזה לשונם: אם לא אתן הם הורגים אותי, ואם אדבר כנגדך אתה הורגני. והפתיב כיון לכל הדרכים.

³ וירדתי ודברתי (במדבר יא, יז), להודיעך שיש מני הזקנים הזה חביב לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא כיום מתן תורה שכתוב בו (שמות יט, יא): כי ביאם השלישי ירד ה' לעיני כל העם, אף במני הזקנים קתיב שם ירדה, למה הדבר דומה למלך שהיה לו פרדס ושכר לתוכו שומר ונתן לו שכר השמירה, לאחר זמן אמר לו השומר איני יכול לשמרו כלו לבדי, אלא הבא עוד אחרים שישמרו עמי. אמר לו המלך נתתי לך את הפרדס פלו לשמרו וכל פרות שמירתן לך נתתי, ועכשו אתה אומר הבא לי עוד אחרים שישמרו עמי, ... כך אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה, כשאמר לא אוכל אנכי לבדי לשאת, אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא איני נתתי בך רוח ודעת לפרנס את בני, ולא הייתי מבקש אחר כד שתתחמד אתה באותה גדלה, ואתה מבקש אחר, תדע שמשלי אינו נוטלין כלום אלא (במדבר יא, יז): ואצלתי מן הרום אשר עליך, ואף על פי כן משה לא חסר כלום, וכו'. (במדבר רבה טו:כה)

pocket. I'm going to take the wages out of what I gave you. That nice paycheck I gave you - you're going to share with them." Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Moshe, "You're telling Me you can't handle this job? I gave you *Ruach, Daas*. I gave you spirit, I gave you *Daas* to carry My children.

"And I didn't want anybody else. I wanted you to do this job all by yourself. And you want others to do the job now?! You should know, I'm not going to give them from what's Mine. But I'm going to take away from what I gave you: ואצלתי מן הרוח ואשר עליך and I'm going to give them from your *Ruach*." And still and all, Moshe Rabbeinu didn't lose anything, the Medrash concludes.

Now, there is no *safek* that it is beyond us to know exactly what Moshe was thinking or what his position was. But it seems that there was some *chisaron* here in Moshe's full recognition of the powers and *kochos* that Hashem had invested in him. And there was an *onesh*. The *onesh* was that it appeared to the eyes of the others that Hashem took away something from Moshe and transferred it to the seventy elders. We learn from here a tremendous lesson.

EVERY YID HAS UNLIMITED KOCHOS

Every single one of us has tremendous *kochos*, unlimited! And a person has to believe in his *kochos*. And a person has to try to bring out these *kochos* to reality. How many times have people called me and said, "I can't do this job"? I once knew a woman who never worked in a professional job.

She was desperate for a job at that time. Desperate. And one day she met a woman in a store who said, "I'm a principal of an elementary school. Would you like to be a principal? I'm taking off for maternity leave. I'll be out for a few months. Would you like to be the principal?" Now, for this lady, offering her a principal position was like asking her if she wanted to build a new bridge across the Hudson River.

This job was above and beyond her! So she was ready to say, "Absolutely not." But she called me up and mentioned it to me. I said, "I told you that Hashem was going to answer your *tefillos*. I told you that Hashem was going to come through for you after you lost your other job. Here it is. This is the job." And she said, "But I can't be a principal! How can I run a school?! I don't know what to do!" I said, "If you couldn't do the job, Hashem would not have offered it to you. If Hashem offered it to you, it means Hashem is telling you that you have that ability." I said, "If you get stuck, any situation you face, you don't know what to do, say: 'I'm going to think about it now.' And go into your office, dial my number, and I will give you some guidance, *eitza ve'tushia*. And you'll be a wonderful principal." And that's exactly what happened. She came into that school and succeeded beyond anyone's dreams.

Now, there were two teachers in that school who were old maids. They weren't married. They were bitter. And they didn't like her, and they didn't have any respect for this new principal. They said, "We don't have to listen to you. You're not a teacher, you're nobody." Well, she called me up and said, "What should I do?" And all the other teachers told her, "These two are big troublemakers." And this woman called the principal who was home on maternity leave, and she said, "Why didn't you tell me about them?!" "Because I knew you wouldn't take the job, so I didn't want to tell you about these two teachers." So she called me up, and I said, "You're going to win them over, and you're going to have them eating out of the palms of your hands."

And she said, "How? They're very bitter, unless I get them a *shidduch*, I don't think they're going to change." I said, "No you don't have to get them a *shidduch*. What you're going to do is you're going to buy each one of them a small gift. The first thing to get them is a cup. A cup that says 'Teacher number one.' That's what you do. Let it come together with a little balloon that says 'Amazing.' And you give it to each one to put on her desk, that everybody should know this is what the new principal gave them.

"Then you're going to invite them out to have a cup of coffee. When you come out, they may not take it, but offer them like the best desserts you could find on the menu. See what they like, a banana split, or they like the biggest mousse around, or they like the most exciting cup of coffee, what do they like? Make them an offer and don't let them say no, you make sure they eat or drink your desserts, your *shochad*. And tell them, 'you know, it must be hard for you. It must be rough for you. You've been teaching all these years. And I want to tell you something, that I feel for you and *imoi anochi betzara*.'" And from the next day on, she acquired for herself two 'puppies,' who were ready to eat out of her hand, and to take guidance from her, and ask her questions.

She took them out on different days. I told her one day one, one day the other. They became her friends. That's how you have to win over people. You could do that.

I don't care if they're bitter. It's called עשה את המר מתוק, make what's bitter sweet. Everybody has *kochos*. And this lady did a tremendous job as the principal.

It went to her head, she said, "You know, I can be a principal anywhere, I can do anything." I said, "You can." I said, "Now, why don't you think of working in a seminary?" "A seminary, me?!" "Yes, you! That was the next step. And then on to high schools!" Amazing.

HORSEBACK RIDING WITH A GUN TO YOUR HEAD

In the Mir Yeshiva in Europe, there were *bochurim* who were taken to the war against their will. And there was one *bochur* who was a *shvacha bochur* and they took him to the army. A short while later, he came out.

Reb Yerucham was very concerned about this fellow while he was in the army, and he kept on asking what's going on with him, anybody hear from him? One day the guy shows up in the yeshiva and he says, "What are you doing here?" He said, "I'll tell you, I was taken into the army to a certain division, and there was a whole group of *bochurim* with us. They took us out of these big trucks, and they told us to stay in this camp. And after a while they brought us together, and there was a whole row of horses. And every one of us had to jump on the horse and gallop away quickly.

"And not only that, you had to jump, you had to run a couple of meters. It was *mamash not stam*." So Reb Yerucham asked him, "Have you ever been on a horse before?" The guy said, "No, I was never on a horse."

"I thought so, a guy like you, *vos shaiches* do you have to a horse?" So the *bochur* said, "No, I didn't." So Reb Yerucham said, "So how were you *matzliach* to pass?" "So I'll tell you what happened," he says. "There was a soldier standing with a loaded rifle, and he made an announcement: Whoever is not going to be *zocha*, *matzliach* to jump on this horse and ride off, is getting shot on the spot and getting buried right here."

He said, "Instantly all of us were able to jump, run, jump, hop on those horses and ride off. It was a *pelah*," he said. So Reb Yerucham said over the story and said, "Wow." The conclusion is that every person has amazing *kochos*.

The problem is, you don't know. *Nu*, so what happens? We don't undertake things, we don't do things. There's a person who's doing a job, many people, and I ask them, "What do you get paid?" And they say to me, "Why do you care?" I said, "I want to know if you're getting underpaid." And many times people feel they're getting underpaid.

I said, "You shouldn't accept that. Tomorrow morning, I want you to go to the boss and tell him you want your salary doubled." You deserve it. You do so much work there.

"Nah, that doesn't work in the real world, right, you don't know what's going on in the *real* world. You can't ask people to double your salary! That's a crazy ask!" So why not? And I've had a number of occasions where people went and they asked for double their salary and the person said, "Okay." I know somebody who had no experience in a job, and they were doing very well at the job, but they were getting paid \$50,000, and it wasn't enough for them.

You know what I said? "Go ask for a hundred grand." "What do you mean?! They'll fire me, they'll throw me out the window because I'm not even that experienced." "They won't throw you out the window. Stand tall, don't talk to them, talk to Hashem. Say, 'Hashem, You know I can do this business. Help me out.'" He walked in the next day, he got the *kochos* to march into this boss. The boss said, "What do you want?" He said, "I want a salary of a hundred grand." The boss says, "You want a hundred k?!" He started to laugh. He said, "Okay, you got it. You deserve it." The employee said, "What?! So why didn't you give it to me before?!" "Well, you never asked. I'm not going to give it to you if you don't ask." Unbelievable!

A person has to rise to the occasion and recognize that he has tremendous *kochos*, and that there is a great deal of *bracha* and *hatzlacha* waiting for him. But he has to know his *kochos*, believe in his *kochos*, and aim and strive to reach his full potential. When a person does that, he can be very successful.

IN CONCLUSION

Everyone has something in life that they want so badly that without it, life is just not worth living. For the Bnei Yisrael in the midbar, it was meat, but for us, it could be a job with steady *parnassah* or a respectable *shtellar*. Logically, we know that Hashem looks after us and He gives us everything that we need, but we struggle to put that knowledge into our hearts. The result is a tough battle against despair when the going gets tough. We see from this week's *parshah* that the complaints of the *erev rav* and the Bnei Yisrael almost wore down the greatest prophet that ever lived. But Hashem knew that He had given Moshe all the *kochos* he needed to succeed in leading the Bnei Yisrael. Hashem wanted Moshe to reach into his reservoirs of strength and to believe in his *kochos*, so he could actualize them. We too need to focus on our potential strengths that Hashem has already given us - for Hashem always provides a person with everything they need. This week, (*bli neder*) if I am challenged and I feel I am missing things I need, instead of sinking in despair and negativity, I will be *m'chazek* my *bitachon* and say, "Hashem, I know You are taking care of me. You will provide all my needs. You love me and You are all-capable. I believe there is a lot of *brachah* waiting for me. Please Hashem give the *brachah* to me, and help me make all my potential *kochos* real.