

Near the end of this week's *Parashah*, we read of the uniqueness of Moshe Rabbeinu's prophecy compared to that of other prophets. *Hashem* says (12:6-8), "If there shall be a prophet among you, in a vision I, *Hashem*, shall make Myself known to him, in a dream, I shall speak with him. Not so is My servant Moshe--in My entire house, he is the trusted one. Mouth to mouth I speak to him, in a clear vision and not in riddles . . ."

*Midrash Shir Ha'shirim Rabbah* relates that *Bnei Yisrael* received the Torah with such clarity that they did not forget what they had learned. However, when they made the Golden Calf, they began to forget. Thereafter, they said to Moshe, "If only G-d would reveal Himself to us a second time. If only (*Shir Ha'shirim* 1:2) 'He will kiss me with the kiss of His mouth.'" Moshe replied, "Not now, but in the future He will." [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R' Yaakov Moshe Charlap *z"l* (1882-1951; rabbi of Sha'arei Chesed and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav) writes: Since that time, we are unable to find inner peace or tranquility--not until we see the fulfillment of the verse, "He will kiss me with the kiss of His mouth," *i.e.*, when every Jew will attain Moshe's level: "Mouth to mouth I speak to him."

It is true, R' Charlap adds, that the Torah says (*Devarim* 34:10), "Never again has there arisen in *Yisrael* a prophet like Moshe, whom *Hashem* had known face to face." However, that does not contradict the message of the above *Midrash*, for another *Midrash* (the *Mechilta*) teaches that Moshe is equal to all of the Jewish People. Moshe's level included all of the actual and potential accomplishments of all of the Jewish People for all time, and, in that respect, no prophet will ever be like him. However, attaining the level of prophecy described as, "Mouth to mouth I speak to him," all of the Jewish People can, and certainly will, do, writes R' Charlap. (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Mei Marom* p.78)

## Shabbat

It is a nearly universally observed custom to recite *Ha'motzi* over two loaves of bread--*Challot* or *Matzot*--at each of the *Shabbat* meals. However, there are other customs.

R' Yeshayah Halevi Horowitz *z"l* (the *Shelah Hakadosh*; rabbi of Prague and Yerushalayim; died 1630) writes in the name of R' Menachem Azaryah of Fano *z"l* (1548-1620; Italian *Halachic* authority and a noted Kabbalist) that one should set his table for the Friday night *Seudah* / meal with twelve loaves, for the morning *Seudah* with eight loaves, for *Seudah Shlishit* with four, and for *Melaveh Malka* with two--a total of twenty-six loaves, paralleling the *Gematria* of *Hashem's* name.

R' Eliyah Shapira *z"l* (the *Eliyah Rabbah*; *Rosh Yeshiva* and *Darshan* in Prague; died 1712) quotes the above custom and writes: One should not do this unless he is versed in *Kabbalah*. Indeed, such a custom is not mentioned in the *Talmud*, and the *Talmud* implies otherwise--*i.e.*, that two loaves should be used at each meal.

R' Chaim Yosef David Azulai *z"l* (*Chida*; 1724-1806; Chevron, *Eretz Yisrael* and Livorno, Italy) cites the *Eliyah Rabbah* and disagrees in part. He writes that a person who is not versed in *Kabbalah* should not discuss, or even think about, Kabbalistic matters, and he should not pray from a *Siddur* that contains Kabbalistic notations or commentaries. When one is not versed in these matters, he invariably will misunderstand them and do more harm than good--may his Master forgive him (*Chida's* words). Furthermore, praying from such a *Siddur*, even if one does not look at the commentaries, is prohibited because it is a haughty act.

In contrast, continues *Chida*, one is permitted to conform his practices to those of the "masters of secrets" (*e.g.*, having the number of loaves listed above) even if he does not understand the reasons for those practices, so long as his intention is for the sake of Heaven and not to show off. Indeed, writes *Chida*, it is a good thing to do so, because *Mitzvot* have a positive effect on our souls whether we understand them or not. The main thing is that one's intention should be to please his Creator.

(*Birkat Eliyahu: Melaveh Malka* ch.6)

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**“The rabble that was among them cultivated a craving, and *Bnei Yisrael* also wept once more, and said, ‘Who will feed us meat?’” (11:4-5)**

Why, all of a sudden, did the nation crave meat? R’ Shaul z”l of Amsterdam (1717-1790) explains:

During the 40 years in the desert, *Bnei Yisrael* were forbidden to eat any meat except the meat of *Shelamim* sacrifices. Such sacrifices had to be brought in the *Mishkan* / Tabernacle, and could only be offered when the nation was encamped and the *Mishkan* was assembled.

The meat of a *Shelamim* sacrifice may be eaten for two days after the sacrifice is offered. At this point, however, *Bnei Yisrael* had been traveling for three days straight. Accordingly, they had run out of meat to eat.

(*Binyan Ariel: Chadrei Torah*)

**“We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge, and the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic.” (11:5)**

R’ Shlomo Moshe Amar *shlita* (former *Sefardi* Chief Rabbi of Israel, now *Sefardi* Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim) asks: Surely *Bnei Yisrael* understood that the Egyptians had not made these foods available to their Jewish slaves out of the goodness of their hearts. If *Bnei Yisrael* had these foods in Egypt, it could only be understood as evidence of *Hashem’s* kindness! And, *Hashem* was now providing all of *Bnei Yisrael’s* needs in a most miraculous fashion! What then was there to complain about?

R’ Amar answers: We see here that it is human nature to complain, whether it makes sense or not. The way to defeat this tendency is through *Bitachon* / trust in *Hashem*, which enables a person to have no worries or complaints.

(*Be’chasdecha Vatachti* p.88 n.4)

**“To the people you shall say, ‘*Hit’ka’deshu* / Prepare yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat . . .” (11:18)**

R’ Chaim Vital z”l (1543-1620; Tzefat and Damascus) writes: From this verse we see that the meaning of “*Kedushah*”--usually translated, “holiness”--actually is “preparation.” A person who is “*Kadosh*” is so called because he “prepares” himself to be the bearer of G-d’s Holiness. To properly fulfill that role, one must think only of his Creator’s Honor and not of any honor he may receive from others because he is “*Kadosh*.”

(*Sha’arei Kedushah* 1:3)

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R’ Eliasof concludes: We read (*Kohelet* 7:14), “Be pleased when things go well, but in a time of misfortune reflect--*Elokim* has made the one as well as the other . . .” When things are good, one should cherish the moment like a treasure. When things do not go well, one’s task is to strengthen himself as much as possible by understanding that *Hashem* has given him a job to do.

(*Niglot Leshem Shvo V’achlamah*)

**“And whenever the cloud was lifted from atop the Tent, afterwards *Bnei Yisrael* would journey, and in the place where the cloud would rest, there *Bnei Yisrael* would encamp.**

**“By *Hashem’s* word *Bnei Yisrael* would journey, and by *Hashem’s* word they would encamp; all the days that the cloud would rest upon the *Mishkan* / Tabernacle they would encamp.**

**“When the cloud lingered upon the *Mishkan* many days, *Bnei Yisrael* would keep *Hashem’s* charge and would not journey.**

**“Sometimes the cloud would be upon the *Mishkan* for a number of days; by *Hashem’s* word they would encamp and by *Hashem’s* word they would journey.**

**“And sometimes the cloud would remain from evening until morning, and the cloud would be lifted in the morning and they would journey; or for a day and a night, and the cloud would be lifted and they would journey.**

**“Or for two days, or a month, or a year, when the cloud would linger over the Tabernacle, resting upon it, *Bnei Yisrael* would encamp and would not journey, but when it was lifted they would journey.**

**“By *Hashem’s* word they would encamp, and by *Hashem’s* word would they journey; they safeguarded *Hashem’s* charge, according to *Hashem’s* word through Moshe.” (9:17-23)**

R’ Shlomo Eliasof z”l (1841-1926; leading early 20<sup>th</sup> century Kabbalist; grandfather of R’ Yosef Shalom Elyashiv z”l) observes in the name of R’ Yitzchak of Volozhin z”l (Belarus; died 1849) that these verses seem unnecessarily wordy. What is the Torah teaching us?

He explains: The desert, a place devoid of nearly all physical life, teems with forces of spiritual impurity. *Bnei Yisrael’s* task during their 40 years in the desert was to fight those forces (which *Hashem*, of course, placed there) and to purify and elevate the desert. (The number 40 is associated with “damaging forces,” as reflected in the fact that it is the number of lashes that the Torah designates as the punishment for certain sins.)

But even in the desert, not all places are the same. Sometimes, says the Torah, it would take many days for *Bnei Yisrael* to accomplish their task, sometimes only a day or two, and sometimes one night was enough. In other places, a month, or even a year, was required. By spelling all this out, the Torah is praising *Bnei Yisrael* for their devotion to their mission. Though it was very difficult, “they safeguarded *Hashem’s* charge.”

R’ Eliasof adds: There is a lesson here for every person. Sometimes a person falls from his spiritual level and experiences great challenges in subduing the *Yetzer Ha’ra*. One should not become downcast or depressed when that happens; he should understand that that is the task assigned to him at that moment. **- Continued in box on facing page -**