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Moses' Worst Crisis: **How We Inspire the People Who Inspire Us**

Sigmund Freud's Advice to the Lubavitcher Rebbe in 1903

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Dedicated in honor of **Eda Schottenstein**
With much appreciation and respect
By her husband **David Schottenstein**

And in the merit of **Yaakov** ben **Leah Pesya**

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1. Class Description:

It was the worst crisis in Moses' life. Incited by the 'mixed multitude', the Israelites complain about the food: 'If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost; the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna.' It was an appalling show of ingratitude, but not the first time the Israelites had behaved this way. Three similar episodes occurred previously and are recorded in the book of Exodus. Previously, he had either fulfilled their requests, or if unreasonable, rebuked the people. Yet Moses' reaction this time is dramatically different: "I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me! If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now - if I have found favor in Your eyes - and do not let me face my own ruin."

What triggered this Moses' despair? And how did G-d respond and comfort him? And if Moses felt that the burden of leadership was unbearable, what gave him the strength to continue?

One possible answer to these questions provides a simple but moving lesson in the importance for a student or disciple to give feedback and express appreciation to his mentor, even when the student thinks that his successes are completely insignificant in the shadow of his teacher's greatness. A fascinating encounter between the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom Dovber Schneerson, and Dr. Sigmund Freud in 1903 illustrates this point.

2. Sources:

מקורות:

1. Numbers	א. במדבר
Chapter 11	פרק יא
4. But the multitude among them began to have strong cravings. Then even the children of Israel once again began to cry, and they said, "Who will feed us meat?"	(ד) וְהָאֲסִפְסוּף אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבּוֹ הִתְאַוּוּ תַאֲנֹה וַיִּשְׁבּוּ וַיִּבְכּוּ גַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ מִי יַאֲכִלֵנוּ בָּשָׂר :
5. We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge, the cucumbers, the watermelons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic	(ה) זָכְרָנוּ אֶת הַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר נֹאכַל בְּמִצְרַיִם חֲנֹם אֶת הַקִּשְׁאִים וְאֶת הָאֲבֹטְחוֹת וְאֶת הַחֲצִיר וְאֶת הַבְּצָלִים וְאֶת הַשּׁוּמִים :
6. But now, our bodies are dried out, for there is nothing at all; we have nothing but manna to look at."...	(ו) וַעֲתָה נִפְשָׁנוּ יִבֶּשֶׂה אִין כָּל בְּלִתִּי אֶל הַמָּן עֵינֵינוּ ... :
10. Moses heard the people weeping with their families, each one at the entrance to his tent. The Lord became very angry, and Moses considered it evil.	(י) וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה אֶת הָעָם בֹּכֶה לְמִשְׁפְּחוֹתָיו אִישׁ לְפִתַּח אֹהֶלוֹ וַיַּחַר אֵף ה' מְאֹד וַבְּעֵינָיו מִשֶׁה רָע :
11. Moses said to the Lord, "Why have You treated Your servant so badly? Why have I not found favor in Your eyes that You place the burden of this entire people upon me?"	(יא) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל ה' לָמָּה הִרְעִיתָ לְעַבְדְּךָ וְלָמָּה לֹא מָצִיתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְשׁוּם אֶת מִשְׁאָל כָּל הָעָם הַזֶּה עָלַי :
12. Did I conceive this entire people? Did I give birth to them, that You say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom as the nurse carries the suckling,' to the Land You promised their forefathers	(יב) הֲאֵנֹכִי הִרִיתִי אֶת כָּל הָעָם הַזֶּה אִם אֲנֹכִי יִלְדֵתִיהוּ כִּי תֹאמַר אֵלַי שְׂאֵהוּ בְּחִיקְךָ כְּאִשׁוֹ יִשָּׂא הָאִמּוֹן אֶת הַיֹּנֵק עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאֲבוֹתָיו :
13. Where can I get meat to give all these people? For they are crying on me, saying, 'Give us meat to eat.'	(יג) מֵאִין לִי בָּשָׂר לְתֵת לְכָל הָעָם הַזֶּה כִּי יִבְכּוּ עָלַי לֵאמֹר תִּנְּהָ לָנוּ בָּשָׂר וְנֹאכְלָה :
14. Alone, I cannot carry this entire people for it is too hard for me.	(יד) לֹא אוּכַל אֲנֹכִי לְבַדִּי לְשֹׂאת אֶת כָּל הָעָם הַזֶּה כִּי כְבֵד מִמֶּנִּי :
15. If this is the way You treat me, please kill me if I have found favor in Your eyes, so that I not see my own misfortune."	(טו) וְאִם כָּכָה אַתָּה עֹשֶׂה לִּי הִרְגֵנִי נָא הֲרֹג אִם מָצִאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְאֵל אֲרָאָה בְּרַעְתִּי :
16. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Assemble for Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the people's elders and officers, and you shall take them to the Tent of Meeting, and they shall stand there with You	(טז) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה אֲסַפֶּה לִּי שִׁבְעִים אִישׁ מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יִדְעָתָּ כִּי הֵם זִקְנֵי הָעָם וְשִׁטְרֵיו וְלִקְחָתָּ אֹתָם אֶל אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְהִתְיַצְּבוּ שָׁם עִמָּךְ :
17. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will increase the spirit that is upon you and bestow it upon them. Then they will bear the burden of the people with you so that you need not bear it alone.	(יז) וַיִּרְדֹּתִי וְדַבַּרְתִּי עִמָּךְ שָׁם וְאַצְלִיתִי מִן הַרוּחַ אֲשֶׁר עָלֶיךָ וְשִׁמְתִי עֲלֵיהֶם וְנִשְׂאוּ אִתְּךָ בְּמִשְׁאָל הָעָם וְלֹא תִשָּׂא אֹתָהּ לְבַדְּךָ :

<p>18. And to the people, you shall say, 'Prepare yourselves for tomorrow and you shall eat meat, because you have cried in the ears of the Lord saying, "Who will feed us meat, for we had it better in Egypt." [Therefore,] the Lord will give you meat, and you shall eat</p> <p>19. You shall eat it not one day, not two days, not five days, not ten days, and not twenty days.</p> <p>20. But even for a full month until it comes out your nose and nauseates you. Because you have despised the Lord Who is among you, and you cried before Him, saying, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?""</p>	<p>(יח) וְאֵל הָעָם תֹּאמַר הִתְקַדְּשׁוּ לְמַחֵר וְאָכַלְתֶּם בֶּשֶׂר כִּי בִכְיֹתֶם בְּאָזְנֵי ה' לֵאמֹר מִי יֵאָכְלֵנוּ בֶּשֶׂר כִּי טוֹב לָנוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם וְנָתַן ה' לָכֶם בֶּשֶׂר וְאָכַלְתֶּם :</p> <p>(יט) לֹא יוֹם אֶחָד תֵּאָכְלוּ וְלֹא יוֹמִים וְלֹא חֲמֵשֶׁה יָמִים וְלֹא עֶשְׂרִים יוֹם :</p> <p>(כ) עַד חֹדֶשׁ יָמִים עַד אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מֵאַפְּכֶם וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְזָרָא יַעַן כִּי מֵאַסְתֶּם אֶת ה' אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְתִבְכוּ לִפְנֵי לֵאמֹר לָמָּה זֶה יֵצְאֵנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם :</p>
<p>2. Rashi Numbers, Chapter 11, Verse 16</p> <p><i>"Assemble for Me seventy men of the elders of Israel"--</i></p> <p>This is a response to Moses' complaint, when he said, "Alone I cannot [carry this entire people for it is too hard for me.]"</p>	<p>ב. רש"י במדבר פרק יא, פסוק טז</p> <p>אֶסְפָּה לִּי שִׁבְעִים אִישׁ מִזְקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל –</p> <p>הרי תשובה לתלונתך שאמרת לא אוכל אנכי לבדי.</p>
<p>3. Nachmanides Numbers, Chapter 11, Verse 14</p> <p>[How would appointing seventy elders alleviate Moses' burden?] The elders could not help Moses providing meat, because where would <u>they</u> get it from? And even if he appointed them to high positions, the people would still only complain against Moses because <u>he</u> was the one who took them out of Egypt, as they were wont to say, "Why did you take us out of Egypt?" And Moses was the one who, through his prayers, always fulfilled their requests and desires.</p> <p>Rather Moses thought that whenever the people would complain the many leaders would be able to talk to their hearts and dissipate their anger.</p> <p>[Another explanation:] Perhaps when the people would see that that the elders were true prophets with increased spirit, they would not only gather to Moses but would make their requests from them as well.</p>	<p>ג. רמב"ן במדבר פרק יא, פסוק יד</p> <p>(יד) וטעם לא אוכל אנכי לבדי - לא שיעזרוהו הזקנים לתת להם בשר, כי מאין להם. ועוד, אפילו בהיות להם פרנסים רבים לא יתלוננו רק על משה רבינו שהוציאם ממצרים, כמנהגם לאמר לו "למה העליתנו ממצרים", והוא שיתן להם בתפלתו כל משאלותם ותאותם יביא להם.</p> <p>אבל חשב משה, כי בהיות להם מנהיגים רבים ישככו חמתם וידברו על לבם בעת תלונתם.</p> <p>ואפשר כי כאשר התנבאו הזקנים שנאצל עליהם מן הרוח וידעו העם כי נאמנים הם לנביאים, לא יתאספו כלם על משה, וישאלו תאותם גם מהם :</p>

<p>4. Numbers Chapter 11</p> <p>26. Now two men remained in the camp; the name of one was Eldad and the name of the second was Medad, and the spirit rested upon them. They were among those written, but they did not go out to the tent, but prophesied in the camp.</p> <p>27. The lad ran and told Moses, saying, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp (that Moses would die in the desert)!"</p> <p>28. Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant from his youth, answered and said, Moses, my master, imprison them!"</p> <p>29. Moses said to him, "Are you zealous for my sake? If only all the Lord's people were prophets, and the Lord would bestow His spirit upon them!"</p>	<p>ד. במדבר פרק יא</p> <p>(כו) וַיִּשְׁאַרוּ שְׁנֵי אַנְשִׁים בַּמַּחֲנֶה שֵׁם הָאֶחָד אֶלְדָּד וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִי מֵדָד וַתֵּנַח עֲלֵיהֶם הָרוּחַ וַהֲמָה בִּכְתָבִים וְלֹא יָצְאוּ הָאֵהָלָה וַיִּתְנַבְּאוּ בַּמַּחֲנֶה :</p> <p>(כז) וַיָּרַץ הַנֶּעֱרַר וַיִּגַּד לְמֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְדָּד וּמֵדָד מִתְנַבְּאִים בַּמַּחֲנֶה :</p> <p>(כח) וַיַּעַן יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נֹון מִשְׁרַת מֹשֶׁה מִבְּחָרָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי מֹשֶׁה כָּלָאִם :</p> <p>(כט) וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מֹשֶׁה הַמְקַנָּא אֶתָּה לִי וּמִי יִתֵּן כָּל עַם ה' נְבִיאִים כִּי יִתֵּן ה' אֶת רוּחוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם :</p>
<p>5. Numbers Chapter 12</p> <p>3. Now this man Moses was exceedingly humble, more so than any person on the face of the earth...</p> <p>5. The Lord descended in a pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the Tent. He called to Aaron and Miriam, and they both went out</p> <p>6. He said, "Please listen to My words. If there are prophets amongst you, [I] the Lord will make Myself known to him in a vision; I will speak to him in a dream.</p> <p>7. Not so is My servant Moses; he is faithful throughout My house</p> <p>8. With him I speak mouth to mouth; in a vision and not in riddles, and he beholds the image of the Lord. So why were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?"</p>	<p>ה. במדבר פרק יב</p> <p>(ג) וְהָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה עֲנִיו מְאֹד מִכָּל הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה :</p> <p>(ה) וַיֵּרָד ה' בְּעַמּוּד עָנָן וַיַּעֲמֵד פֶּתַח הָאֵהָל וַיִּקְרָא אֶהָרֹן וּמִרְיָם וַיִּצְאוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם :</p> <p>(ו) וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמַעוּ נָא דְבָרַי אִם יִהְיֶה נְבִיאֲכֶם ה' בְּמַרְאֵה אֱלֹוֹ אֲתוֹדַע בַּחֲלוֹם אֲדַבֵּר בּוֹ :</p> <p>(ז) לֹא כֵן עֲבָדֵי מֹשֶׁה בְּכָל בֵּיתִי נֹאמָן הוּא :</p> <p>(ח) פֶּה אֶל פֶּה אֲדַבֵּר בּוֹ וּמִרְאֵה וְלֹא בַּחֲדַיִת וַתִּמְנַת ה' יָבִיט וּמַדּוּעַ לֹא יִרְאֶתֶם לְדַבֵּר בְּעַבְדֵי בְּמֹשֶׁה :</p>
<p>6. Jeremiah Chapter 20, Verses 7-18</p> <p>7. O Lord, You enticed me, and I was enticed; You overpowered me and prevailed. I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me .</p> <p>8. For whenever I speak, I cry out; I call out violence and spoil; the word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long .</p>	<p>ו. ירמיהו פרק כ</p> <p>(ז) פִּתִּיתַנִּי ה' וְנֹאפֶת חֲזַקְתַּנִּי וַתּוֹכַל הִייתִי לְשַׁחֲוֹק כָּל הַיּוֹם כֹּלָה לַעַג לִי :</p> <p>(ח) כִּי מִדֵּי אֲדַבֵּר אֲזַעַק חָמָס וְשֹׂד אֶקְרָא כִּי הָיָה דְבַר ה' לִי לְחֲרָפָה וּלְקַלְס כָּל הַיּוֹם ... :</p>

<p>14. Cursed be the day I was born! May the day my mother bore me not be blessed!</p> <p>15. Cursed be the man who brought my father the news, made him very glad, saying, "A child is born to you—a son!"</p> <p>16. And that man (the messenger) shall be like the cities that the Lord overturned and did not relent, and let him hear an outcry in the morning and a scream at noon!</p> <p>17. That he did not put me to death from the womb, that my mother should be my grave and her womb a perpetual pregnancy.</p> <p>18. Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?</p>	<p>(יד) אָרוּר הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִלְדָתִי בּוֹ יוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִלְדָתֵנִי אִמִּי אֶל יְהִי בְרוּךְ:</p> <p>(טו) אָרוּר הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר בָּשַׂר אֶת אָבִי לֵאמֹר יִלְדָ לְךָ בֵּן זָכָר שִׂמְחָה שִׂמְחָהוּ:</p> <p>(טז) וְהָיָה הָאִישׁ הַהוּא כְּעָרִים אֲשֶׁר הִפְךָ ה' וְלֹא נָחַם וְשָׁמַע זַעֲקָהּ בְּבִקְרָהּ וּתְרוּעָהּ בְּעֵת צָהָרִים:</p> <p>(יז) אֲשֶׁר לֹא מוֹתַתֵּנִי מִרְחֹם וַתְּהִי לִי אִמִּי קִבְרִי וְרַחֲמָהּ הָרַת עוֹלָם:</p> <p>(יח) לָמָּה זֶה מִרְחֹם יִצְאָתִי לְרֵאוֹת עֵמָל וְגִזוֹן וַיִּכְלֹוּ בְּבִשְׁתִּי יָמֵי:</p>
<p>7. Babylonian Talmud Bava Basra, 75a</p> <p><i>And you (Moses) shall bestow from your honor upon him (Joshua) (Numbers 2)—<u>from your honor</u> but not <u>all your honor</u>.</i></p> <p>The elders of that generation said: The countenance of Moses was like that of the sun; the countenance of Joshua was like that of the moon. Alas, for such shame! Alas for such reproach!</p>	<p>ז. תלמוד בבלי מסכת בבא בתרא, דף עה, עמוד א</p> <p>ונתתה מהודך עליו (במדבר כ"ז) - ולא כל הודך.</p> <p>זקנים שבאותו הדור אמרו: פני משה כפני חמה, פני יהושע כפני לבנה, אוי לה לאותה בושה, אוי לה לאותה כלימה.</p>
<p>8. Proverbs Chapter 25</p> <p>25. As cold water on a weary soul; and good news from a distant country.</p>	<p>ח. משלי פרק כה</p> <p>(כה) מֵיִם קָרִים עַל נַפְשׁ עֵינָהּ וְשִׂמוּעָה טוֹבָה מֵאַרְצֵי מְרֹחֵק:</p>

3. Questions and Exercises

1. What really caused Moses' profound despair in Parshas Behaloscha? Why was this time different than previous similar episodes?
2. How did seventy people prophesying for a day alleviate Moses' torment?
3. What are the perspectives of Rashi and Ramban? What is still not understood?
4. Which three people have had the greatest impact on your life?
5. Do they know how deeply they affected you? Did you ever share this with them? Why?
6. Do you give positive feedback to the people you have gained from? Is it hard for you to communicate to them your appreciation and gratitude? Why?