

Parsha Thought

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לזכר נשמת מלכה בת יהושע - משה צבי בן גדליה

לזכר נשמת דוד בן אברהם

BEHA'ALOSCHA

After the people complained and were punished, they complained again, this time about the supposed delicacies that they had in Egypt that they didn't have in the desert. Then the posuk says, "וישמע משה את העם בכה למשפחתיו", Moshe heard the people crying within their families, "מאד, ויחר אף ה' מאלה", and the wrath of Hashem flared greatly."

The simple meaning is that families gathered together crying that they couldn't have these foods. The Ohr HaChaim asks why Hashem's anger was so intense just because they were crying about not having the variety of foods they had in Egypt? He answers that, in general, anyone who does something evil due to a powerful temptation can be considered to some degree having acted under the compulsion of the yetzer hara. However, the people who were saying they want to return to Egypt were not exposed at that time to these temptations; it's like they were looking for trouble; they were inciting the yetzer hara within them for no reason and that's something evil in the eyes of Hashem. We have enough temptation without looking for more.

Rashi quotes the gemara that says that they were crying about family matters. Now, they had all the familial prohibitions of the Torah, so they cried. However, where does it say that they were crying about relationships? The only thing the pesukim talk about is them complaining about food. The sefer Mesilos Chaim says that we can learn a powerful insight into human nature. Sometimes, people cry or act on something, but really it has nothing to do with that. Instead, they are crying about something else. He was once at a funeral and saw a man crying unconsolably. He went over to the man and asked is this your father's funeral? The man said no, your uncle's? No, your mother's? No, a family member? No. A close friend? No. So then why are you crying so much? The man answered, "I'm a collector from Israel; I have been going around collecting for the last six months and I raised fifty thousand dollars. Last night, it was all stolen from me. I needed to cry; however, to just stand in the street crying, people would think I'm crazy so I found a funeral to go to, so I can cry my heart out. The Jewish people, too, wanted to cry about family matters. However, they didn't feel it was appropriate to cry about that, so they cried about the food.

Sometimes, a person comes into shul and is complaining about everything, davening is too fast, then too slow, why didn't I get an Aliya; why did I? Complaining about things that don't make sense. However, we must realize that we are not privy of what a person is going through and why he's acting out. It's the same thing at home with a spouse or children; someone might say something that seems uncalled for, but the key is not to respond in kind. After all, we never know what external things can be causing them to act like that. Let's take the lesson to heart and consider all mitigating factors before we answer someone who may be hurting!