

Parshat Beha'alotecha

Don't Just Judge Favorably

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Moshe was history's greatest *anav*, the sole human being who succeeded in making himself so objectively transparent that the word of Hashem was able to flow straight through him, purely authentic and unaltered. However, in this week's parsha, in an embarrassing time for Bnei Yisrael, in response to their terrible complaint, Hashem says: "They will have meat"! Moshe replies to Hashem in desperation: "But Hashem, they are so many! How is it possible to provide all of them with meat?" Rashi quotes R. Shimon who explains that Moshe truly wasn't doubting Hashem's supreme power, but he was merely attempting to seek mercy from Hashem for the death of so many people. However, R. Akiva explains the pasuk according to its simple meaning; Moshe was actually asking Hashem, "How is it possible to feed so many people?"

How can it be that Moshe himself would, even in his most desperate state, question the power of G-d to will into existence?

In his sefer, *Da'as Tevunos*, Ramchal describes the topic of "*tzadik v'ra lo, rasha v'tov lo*" - the idea that righteous people can live a terribly dark and torturous life, while wicked people can very well live a life of peace and tranquility, full of pleasure and serenity until the end of their days. As an introduction, he describes this idea as: "A concept extremely difficult and deep, which troubled the greatest of the sages and prophets, and even Moshe Rabbeinu, for they could not grasp it." When I read this, I suddenly became really scared that I'm missing an integral part of Judaism, or even of basic human understanding. What's so difficult to grasp? Is it not quite simple to look at something even as terrible as the Holocaust and to understand that such horrible suffering is part of a larger plan? Yes, the pain and torture was absolutely inhumane, but it really didn't seem to me that it was so difficult to be able to say "G-d is obviously still in control, and all the suffering one must go through is for his best, and obviously part of a calculation I wasn't given the keys to know!" So what is so hard about the concept of *tzaddik v'ra lo, rasha v'tov lo*?

The answer to this, I think, resolves our first question as well. The reason that I, looking in retrospect from the year 2005 at the Holocaust can see G-d's hand through the nightmare, is because *it wasn't me*. I wasn't the one living the nightmare, struggling to even *desire* to survive because the Torah teaches we must. The same applies to Moshe Rabbeinu.

Throughout our lives we are taught to be *dan l'chaf z'chut* (judge favorably). I remember being taught that this means that when I see Shmulie running from a bank with a mask on and 3 sagging sacks with those huge \$ signs on them - I should think to myself: "I think the reason he's doing that is because he's starring in a movie about a bank robbery." (editor's comment: In this particular instance, your obligation of *hashavat aveida* to the bank would require you to call the police immediately.) We should view the possibilities: either he is sinning or he's not, and then decide that he's probably not for some obscure and usually really strange reason. This year I learned what I think to be the more mature and closer to home definition of the phrase *dan l'chaf zchus*. The point of "judging favorably" is **not to judge at all**. We should look at Moshe Rabbeinu and at those who suffered the Holocaust, and at *everyone around us* and say: "I can't possibly judge them, because the very factor which defines this action that I see as good or bad is hidden from me." If each of us can view the other in such a way, not just to judge favorably, but to step down from the position of judging altogether - BE"H, with such *achdus*, we will be able to actively invite Moshiach.