

**The God who would dine with us**

This weeks reading is from Parsahat Behaalotcha (*Bamidbar / Numbers 8:1-12:15*) and we read in *Bamidbar / Numbers 10:11-36* the Children of Israel set out from the wilderness of Sinai moving out for the first time and the Scriptures describe the deconstruction of the Tabernacle and the order of the tribes as they moved out. The Scriptures then say *11:1 Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the Lord; and when the Lord heard it, His anger was kindled, and the fire of the Lord burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp. (NASB)* The people were complaining about the Manna (bread from Heaven) that God provided and longed for the fish, cucumbers, melons and leeks that were available in the land of Egypt. The people longed for Egypt. Moshe pleads on behalf of the people before the Lord (*11:10-11*). The Lord provides so much meat for the people that they become sick (loathsome) of the meat. While Moshe was speaking with the Lord, the Lord said *“Is the hand of the Lord short”* (הֲיֵיד יְהוָה תִּקְצָר)? All that Moshe had witnessed of the Lord delivering Israel from Egypt, did he doubt the Lord was able to provide meat for the people? Today, amongst believers, is there doubt regarding God’s ability to save His people?

**ספר במדבר פרק יא Bamidbar / Numbers 11:18-23**

יח וְאֶל-הָעָם תֹּאמַר הַתְּקַדְּשׁוּ לְמַחֵר וְאֲכַלְתֶּם בָּשָׂר כִּי בָכִיתֶם בְּאָזְנֵי יְהוָה לֵאמֹר מִי יֵאֲכַלְנוּ בָּשָׂר כִּי-טוֹב לָנוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם וְנָתַן יְהוָה לָכֶם בָּשָׂר וְאֲכַלְתֶּם: יט לֹא יוֹם אֶחָד תֹּאכְלוּן וְלֹא יוֹמִים וְלֹא | חֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים וְלֹא עֶשְׂרֵה יָמִים וְלֹא עֶשְׂרִים יוֹם: כ עַד | חֲדָשׁ יָמִים עַד אֲשֶׁר-יֵצֵא מֵאַפְּכֶם וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְזָרָא יַעַן כִּי-מָאַסְתֶּם אֶת-יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וַתִּבְכוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לֵאמֹר לָמָּה זֶה יֵצְאָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם: כא וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה שִׁש-מֵאוֹת אֶלֶף רַגְלֵי הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ וְאַתָּה אֹמְרַת בָּשָׂר אֶתָּן לָהֶם וְאֲכָלוּ חֲדָשׁ יָמִים: כב הֲצֹאֵן וּבְקָר יִשְׁחַט לָהֶם וּמִצֵּא לָהֶם אִם אֶת-כָּל-דְּגֵי הַיָּם יֵאָסֵף לָהֶם וּמִצֵּא לָהֶם: פ כג וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה הֲיֵיד יְהוָה תִּקְצָר עֲתָה תִרְאֶה הֲיִקְרָה דְּבָרֵי אִם-לֹא:

*11:18 ‘Say to the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat; for you have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, ‘Oh that someone would give us meat to eat! For we were well-off in Egypt.’ Therefore the Lord will give you meat and you shall eat. 11:19 ‘You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, 11:20 but a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you; because you have rejected the Lord who is among you and have wept before Him, saying, ‘Why did we ever leave Egypt?’’ 11:21 But Moses said, ‘The people, among whom I am, are 600, 000 on foot; yet You have said, ‘I will give them meat, so that they may eat for a whole month.’ 11:22 ‘Should flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to be sufficient for them? Or should all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to be sufficient for them?’ 11:23 The Lord said to Moses, ‘Is the Lord’s power limited? Now you shall see whether My word will come true for you or not.’ (NASB)*

For the Children of Yisrael, bread was very significant and essential for their survival in the wilderness. The Torah tells us that the bread from heaven did not end until they entered into the Promised Land. The manna from Heaven preserved their lives. In addition to this, the Scriptures tell us according to *Shemot / Exodus 14:13*, יג וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-הָעָם אֶל-תִּירְאוּ הִתְיַצְּבוּ וּרְאוּ אֶת-יְשׁוּעַת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה לָכֶם הַיּוֹם: 14:13 *But Moses said to the people, 'Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. (NASB)* The people were fleeing from the Egyptian arm and Moshe says to them אֶל-תִּירְאוּ הִתְיַצְּבוּ וּרְאוּ אֶת-יְשׁוּעַת יְהוָה “do not fear, stand and see the salvation of the Lord.” Here Moshe uses the word יְשׁוּעַת the name of our savior and redeemer יְשׁוּעַ Yeshua. Because the word “Yeshua” (יְשׁוּעַ) directs our attention to the salvation of God in the Torah, Yeshua the Messiah challenged the people to see the historical significance of the bread that comes down from Heaven; saying He is the true bread from Heaven. Yeshua drew a parallel on these ancient words to his purpose on earth to sustain his people. When we worship Yeshua, we are by proxy worshipping the One who sent him, our Father in heaven.

Throughout the Scriptures we see the Lord God is continually working to save His people, but not just that, He desires to dwell amongst His people. *Midrash Rabbah Bamidbar, Parashat 15, Part 8* (מדרש רבה במדבר פרשה טו סימן ח) brings an interesting perspective on how the Lord desires to dwell among his people.

***Midrash Rabbah Bamidbar, Parashat 15, Part 8***

*Another exposition of the expression, When You lightest. This bears on the Scriptural text, Even the darkness is not to dark for You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness is even as the light (Tehillim / Psalms 139:12). Yet to us He says, When You light! To what may the matter be compared? To the case of a king who had a friend. The king said to him, I want you to know that I shall dine with you. Go then and make preparations for me. His friend went and prepared a common couch, a common candlestick, and a common table. When the king arrived there came with him ministers who encompassed him on this said and that, and a golden candlestick preceded him. His friend, seeing all this pomp, felt ashamed and put away all that he had prepared for him, as it was all common. Said the king to him, Did I not tell you that I would dine with you? Why did you not prepare anything for me? His friend answered him, Beholding all the pomp that accompanied you, I felt ashamed, and put away all that I had prepared for you, because they were common utensils. By your life! Said the king to him, I shall discard all the utensils that I have brought, and for love of you I shall use none but yours! So in our case. The Holy One blessed be He, is all light; yet He said to Israel, Prepare for Me a candlestick and lamps. What do we find written in this connection? Let them make Me a sanc-*

*tuary, that I may dwell among them (Shemot / Exodus 25:8); and you will make a candlestick of pure gold (Shemot / Exodus 25:31). When they had completed everything the Shechina came. What is written in that connection? Moshe was not able to enter into the tent of meeting because the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (Shemot / Exodus 40:35). Thereupon He called to Moshe; as it says, And the Lord called unto Moshe (Vayikra / Leviticus 1:1), and it is written, When Moshe went into the tent of meeting that He might speak with them, then he heard the Voice speaking (Bamidbar / Numbers 7:89). What did He say to him? When You light the lamps.*

The midrash is speaking about lighting the Menorah in the Tabernacle and draws a parallel to a king who wants to dine with his friend and asks his friend to prepare for the meal. The friend of the king is obviously poor and is only capable of preparing a common couch, a common candle stick and a common table according to the parable. When the king arrives his friend sees his wealth, glory, and honor and feels ashamed of what he has prepared for the king. The point of the midrash is that this king chooses to dine with his friend using what is common. In a similar manner, the Lord asks Moshe to build a dwelling place out of common things. When everything was complete, God's Shechina (glory) came down and dwelled in the Tabernacle. Based upon the Midrash and the Torah, the Lord chooses the common things in order to relate to us here on earth.

The midrash provides us with a parable that draws an allusion to the Lord God who is greatly glorified, having great honor and glory, and is willing to take what is common for the purpose of dwelling among His people. The evidence for this is the various passages that suggests God takes on the form of a man in order to interact with mankind (i.e. Parashat Vayera, *Bereshit / Genesis 18:1-22:24*). According to Parashat Vayera the Lord reveals to Abraham what He is about to do to Sodom and Gomorrah; it is clear that though God can take on human form he does not give up His divine nature and authority.

In *John 1:1-14*, John wrote that *"the word of God tabernacled among us"* (ויהי בר נהיה בשר וישכן בתוכנו ונחזה תפארתו כתפארת בן יחיד לאביו רב הסד ואמת) is understood to mean that the Word of God became a man. The Greek translation of *John 1:14* says "Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας" that *"the word became flesh"* (λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο) and *"tent"* (ἐσκήνωσεν) among us. The Greek text is drawing upon the Torah understanding that God tabernacled with man in the Mishkhan saying that *"the Word tabernacled among us"* (וישכן בתוכנו). According to the Torah, the Mishkhan (Tabernacle) was designed in such a way to describe how God could dwell among His people and yet remain on His throne in heaven. The Lord God also can tabernacle in our hearts by His Holy Spirit. The concept that the Word can make His dwelling here among men according to *John 1:14* is not without precedence in the Scriptures considering the Torah portion Parashat Vayera. John tells us that it is the divine Word (מִימְרָא, Memra) that come down to dwell among us. The Torah indicates that God came down in human form to speak with Abraham and to reveal to him what He

was about to do with Sodom and Gemorah. The difference here is that it is through the Word we can know God personally and this is why it is important that we take the time to daily study God's Word. Our understanding of these verses coupled with this week's Portion show the importance of studying the Bible in order to know God and His will for our lives. It is also important to realize how much the Lord desires to dwell with us. According to the midrash He chooses to dine with us using what is common. In parallel fashion, the Word of God come to dwell in a common body in order to make atonement for each one of us. We also are only able to give to the Lord what is common, but what He gives to us, the Spirit that dwells within each of us, this is far from common. The Apostle Paul said to the romans the following:

***Romans 8:11***

*8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (NASB)*

The Spirit of our Father in heaven is powerful to raise one from the dead and is able to give each one of us life. The Lord giving us life from dead works. Note, dead works are the sins that we commit, remember Paul said the wages of sin is death (*Romans 6:23*). The power of the Spirit to give us life is to overcome sin, and to do good works (מע"ט, Maasim Tovim, *Ephesians 2:10*). Thinking on this week's Torah portion, Parashat Beha'alotcha, the Lord God made the statement about himself saying "*Is the hand of the Lord short?*" (הַיָּד הַקְּצָרָה תִּהְיֶה תִּקְצָר) The answer is "*certainly not*" because He continues to reach out to us, having made a new covenant in the blood of His salvation (Yeshua), and empowering us to have life (to not dwell in dead works / Sin). The Salvation in Yeshua (יְשׁוּעָה) that declares our Father's desire to go to great lengths for the purpose of dining with us. Throughout these many centuries we can see in history the Lord's hand is certainly not short! Praise God!