

## Parshas Behaaloshcha

“The meat was yet between their teeth not yet chewed and *Hashem’s* wrath was kindled against the nation and He smote the nation with an exceedingly large plague.” These frightening words describe *Hashem’s* response to the demand for meat by some of the *ריופוא*, the “riffraff” amongst the Jewish people. G-D gave them their wish to demonstrate that he could deliver vast quantities of meat as they demanded, but he also extracted a very harsh punishment for the demand.

As with all other unhappy episodes in *Tanach*, this story is meant to teach us how to behave and to learn the lessons from this incident. So that begs the question: What was the cause of *Hashem’s* anger in this incident? Was it the demand for animal pleasure? Was it the lack of appreciation for the miracle of the *manna*? Was it the fact that there was rabbleroising going on when the *ריופוא* involved other people in their complaint for meat? These are all plausible explanations and the *pesukim* support these interpretations.

The *Kehilas Yitzchok* (A *Torah* anthology published in Vilna in 1900) offers the following insight based on the *Midrash*. The *Midrash* tells us that the *manna* was delivered to each person according to his spiritual status. If a man was righteous, the *manna* fell at his doorstep. If not, he had to leave the camp and scour the area to collect his daily sustenance. If he was worthy, the *manna* arrived well-prepared. If not, he needed to grind, pound, cook, bake, etc. In effect, every person got a daily update of his standing in G-d’s eyes. This was unnerving for some of the less spiritual people. They didn’t like this level of accountability. They wanted to live their lives without all of the feedback. This is why they wanted food that they could access without the high visibility of *Hashem’s* opinion of them.

*Hashem’s* response to this attitude was very harsh. Accountability is the foundation for growth. It gives us the ability to repair our mistakes and to avoid them in the future. It encourages us to go on to greater things. To reject that feedback is not only rebellion, it shuts the door to any form of development and this was the terrible mistake of the *ריופוא*.

This idea is very important for all of us. It is repeated in *Tanach* and in the writings of our sages. The wise person appreciates constructive criticism and seeks feedback and guidance to grow more and more. As parents, we need to speak to our children and to guide them. We should praise their good efforts and good choice, and we should correct them when they have fallen short so that they grow into well-developed people.