



לקוטי שיחות
PROJECT
LIKKUTEI
SICHOS

Sicha Summary

Chelek 16 | Beshalach | Sichah 2

The Context:

On their way from the Sea of Reeds to Mount Sinai, the Jewish people's bread supply was exhausted. They complained to Moshe and Aharon that they would rather have died in Egypt, where they had food, than die of starvation in the wilderness. In response, G-d gave the people quail as meat, and manna as bread. (*Shemos* 16: 1-5) Before this, though, Moshe informed the people of what G-d would do for them:

“Moshe and Aharon said to all the children of Israel, ‘In the evening, you will know that G-d took you out of the land of Egypt. And in the morning you will see the glory of G-d, that He has heard your complaints against G-d...’” (*Shemos* 16:6-7) And Moshe said, “When, in the evening, G-d gives you meat to eat and bread for satiety in the morning, as G-d hears your complaints... against Him...” (ibid. 16:8)

The Rashis:

Rashi comments on both these verses. Strangely, however, he repeats the same idea with slight variations twice, in immediate succession.

Verse 7: *In the morning you will see the glory of G-d* — Moshe said to them as follows: “In the evening you will know that He has the wherewithal to satisfy your longing and He will give meat, but He will not give it to you graciously, with a radiant countenance, because you asked for it improperly and from a full stomach. But regarding the bread, which you requested for a legitimate need, in its descent in the morning you will see the glory of the radiance of His countenance. For he will bring it to you in a loving manner....

Verse 8: *Meat to eat* — but not to be satisfied {as the verse says regarding bread}.... What did G-d see that made Him bring down the bread in the morning and the meat in the evening? Because they requested the bread properly, for a person cannot exist without bread. But they requested the meat improperly, for they had many cattle. Furthermore, they could have gone without meat altogether. Therefore, He gave them the meat at a bothersome time, inconveniently.

The Questions:

Why does Rashi repeat the same content twice — that the people were justified in asking for bread but their request for meat was improper? And why are some details provided in the first comment and other details provided in the second comment?

The Preface to the Explanation:

Rashi was bothered by a general question regarding this passage: Why was one message divided into two separate statements? The content could have been delivered with one statement: “When, in the evening, G-d gives you meat to eat you will know that G-d took you out of the land of Egypt, and [when He gives you] bread for satiety in the morning you will see the glory of G-d....”

Instead, verses 6-7 which are delivered by Moshe and Aharon only foreshadow in a general sort of way: “In the evening, you will know that G-d took you out of the land of Egypt. And in the morning you will see the glory of G-d.” And verse 8 is said by Moshe alone and is an elaboration of how the people will “know and see,” when “in the evening, G-d gives you meat to eat and bread for satiety in the morning.”

The Seed of the Explanation:

G-d’s response to the Jewish people’s complaint was two-pronged: a) He reprimanded them for their spiritual and moral failing; and b) He addressed their actual request for food.

In verses 6-7, Moshe and Aharon informed the people how G-d was going to address their moral failure. This was communicated, therefore, by Moshe and Aharon, because they were both responsible for the spiritual growth of the people. It did not include the actual solution to the people's problem, because it focused on their behavior.

In verse 8, Moshe told the people how G-d would actually provide for their needs — “G-d gives you meat to eat and bread for satiety in the morning.” This was communicated, therefore, by Moshe alone because he was responsible for the people's material well-being.

But each response — the educational as well as the practical — was further divided into two details corresponding to two opposing thrusts of the Jewish people's complaint. On the one hand, they complained in a disrespectful tone displaying a crass spiritual state. On the other hand, by addressing their complaint to G-d, they showed that they truly did believe that it was G-d who could provide for them.

In the verses of moral education, Moshe and Aharon told the people that in response to their doubt and disrespect G-d would make it known “in the evening” that He “took you out of the land of Egypt.” And commensurate with their display of faith in G-d by asking Him for food, G-d would reveal Himself — “in the morning you will see the glory of G-d.”

In verse 8, where Moshe described how G-d would practically provide food, the distinction between evening and morning was again important because it informed the people of the different ways that G-d would deliver their sustenance.

Rashi's two comments elucidate these messages:

The Explanation:

In his commentary on verse 7, Rashi explains how G-d's two educational responses, “in the evening... in the morning” correlate with the meat and bread that were given at those times.

“In the evening you will know that He has the wherewithal to satisfy your longing and He will give meat, but He will not give it to you graciously, with a radiant countenance, because you asked for it improperly and from a full stomach.” Meaning, because their improper behavior was expressed in their asking for meat, G-d reprimanded them by not providing it “graciously.”

“But regarding the bread, which you requested for a legitimate need, in its descent in the morning you will see the glory of the radiance of His countenance. For he will bring it to you in a loving manner...” Meaning, because they expressed their faith by asking G-d for bread, G-d would give them bread graciously.

The focus here is that G-d expresses His displeasure regarding their request for meat, and His pleasure regarding their request for bread, but not in the exact way the meat was provided. (Rashi does detail the way the *manna* was provided because of how counterintuitive it would be for G-d to still value their request despite its overall tone).

In his commentary on verse 8, Rashi explains how the propriety of the people’s requests affected how they received the food. “What did G-d see that made Him bring down the bread in the morning and the meat in the evening? Because they requested the bread properly, for a person cannot exist without bread. But they requested the meat improperly, for they had many cattle. Furthermore, they could have gone without meat altogether. Therefore, He gave them the meat at a bothersome time, inconveniently.”

Here, the focus is on how the food was actually delivered, not on moral instruction. However, to explain the distinction in that delivery (evening vs. morning), Rashi had to again highlight the difference in propriety of these requests (proper for bread, improper for meat).

The Deeper Dimension:

Oil alludes to the mystical realm of Torah. Quail meat, which is oily and fatty, alludes to the mystical realm of Torah as it is articulated in rational

terms — as digestible, tasty “meat.” The heavenly manna/bread alludes to the legal realm of Torah, the bare necessities.

The request for bread was proper, because every generation must know how to behave in accordance with Torah. Their request for animal meat, however, was improper because “they had many cattle. Furthermore, they could have gone without meat altogether.” Meaning: a) they asked for cattle, alluding to a materialised mysticism stripped of any spiritual import; and b) they did not need this exposure to mysticism (“meat”) for they were spiritual people living in the desert, far from physical distraction.

Our generations, however, do need the mystical “meat” to contend with the world we live in and in order to usher in the Messianic Era.