

A Life Of Its Own

פרשת בהעלתך

We live in a generation where we are constantly surrounded by temptations and pleasures. This easy accessibility allows a person to realize the emptiness and the void of the physical world at an early age, whereas in previous generations attaining wealth and achieving our desires took a much longer period of time. However, in this week's Parsha, Rabbeinu Bachya tells us that engaging in our passions and desires may have the opposite effect, and at times may stifle our longing for growth and connection to Hashem.

The Rabbeinu Bachya comments on Bnei Yisroel's complaints regarding the Manna. He says (11:5): "The vegetables the pasuk mentions indicates their bad nature, and to the intensity of their passions. This applied to the ערב רב, and the great people of Klal Yisrael who were influenced by the ערב רב, and were also drawn after their physical desires. The pasuk is repetitive in using the word 'desire', to emphasize the intensity of their desire, that they draw out the desire. This desire intensified to the extent that they wanted to indulge in every physical pleasure without any bounds. Like it said, they were crying regarding the forbidden relationships. They did not pay any attention to lofty intellectual

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pursuits. This is the meaning of their expression, 'We only have the manna.' The manna was simple in its physical form, however, intellectually it sharpened the mind and led to wisdom. Therefore, they cheapened and degraded it, as it was the opposite of their nature. Their magnified desire caused them to consider the highest achievement as a deficiency, as their intellect was blinded in their pursuit of physical desires."

This Rabbeinu Bachya shares with us a powerful and rather shocking insight into the far reaching impact of physical temptation. He is referring to the דור דעה, a generation that is considered the greatest generation ever. They witnessed Hashem at Har Sinai, and expressed a trust in Him that is considered a kindness for all generations. Their

personal מדריגה is incomprehensible to us. Yet this generation was influenced by the ערב רב, to follow their desire, and long for meat. Once this desire took root, one thing led to another, until the passion broke loose, and took on a life of its own. This desire expanded and now they even desired forbidden relationships. Culminating in a lack of focus and eventually a repulsion to intellectual growth, as the שכל became antithetical to their pursuit of physical pleasure.

We see from here how cautious we have to be in the beginning stages of תאוה. Although it may seem small and insignificant, once allowed to expand, it knows no bounds. Additionally we see how detrimental and blinding the pursuit of physical desires can be to our שכל. Our physical passions, don't only cause us to not pay attention to intellectual and lofty pursuits. They also cause us to devalue and despise our intellect as it represents an obstacle to desire achieving its goal. If this had a slight affect on the דור דעה, how much more so are we vulnerable to the impact of תאוה.