



I. Is this story the same as that in Shemot 16-17?

1. Bekhor Shor, Numbers 20:8:1

(א) וקח את המטה. להכות בסלע, לפי הנראה לי זהו מעשה שבויהי בשלח דכתיב ביה "והכית בצור ויצאו" אלא שלשם מספר איך פירנס הק' את ישראל במן ושליש ומים במדבר, ואחר כך כתב כל אחד במקומו ותדע שאחד הוא זה המעשה ואותו, דהתם כתיב "ויקרא שם המקום הזה מסה ומריבה", ובזאת הברכה הוא אומר על זה המעשה שהקפיד הק' על משה ואהרן "אשר נסיתו במשא תריבהו על מי מריבה" אלמא דמעשה אחד הוא And he took the rod: to strike the rock. It seems that this is the same story as Beshalach, as it says and he struck the stone and departed. However, there is tells how G-d sustained the Jews with manna, quail, and water in the desert, and then it relates each in its place. Know this, that this is the same story, as it says there "and he called this place Masa U'Meriva", and in V'Zot HaBeracha he says about this story that God was exacting with Moshe and Aharon for "testing at Masa and fighting at the Mei Meriva." Thus, you see that it is the same story.

2. Most assume this a different story. It is worse because it is the second time and it is uncalled for. Also, what was the goal of the first vs. second?

3. Exodus 17:7

(ז) וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם מַסָּה וּמְרִיבָה עַל־יָרִיב וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל נַפְתָּם אֶת־ה' לֵאמֹר הֲיֵשׁ ה' בְּקִרְבָּנוּ אִם־אֵין: (פ)

(7) The place was named Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and because they tried the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD present among us or not?"

4. R. Chanoch Waxman

A. 11:11	God has done evil to (<i>hareiota</i>) Moshe	<p>In contrast to this well balanced structure, the tone of Moshe's speech is near frantic. In staccato bursts, he piles question-upon-question upon God: Why have you done me wrong? Have I conceived them? Have I birthed them? Without pausing for response he concludes there is only one way out. In the latter part of his speech, in the close of the chiasitic frame, where Moshe seeks reversal and presents his plea, he requests his own death. He would rather die then deal with the people of Israel and their complaints.</p> <p>While we may sympathize with Moshe, Moshe's lament requires some explanation. After all, the people have complained before.</p>
B. 11:11	Moshe has not found favor in God's eyes	
C. 11:11	Burden of the people (<i>masa</i>) upon Moshe	
D. 11:12-13	Birth metaphor, Accusation of injustice, Reference to people's complaint for meat	
C. 11:14	CANNOT bear burden (<i>laseit</i>) alone	
B. 11:15	HAVE found favor – request for death	
A. 11:15	NOT see evil fate (<i>bera'ati</i>)	

5. R. Elchanan Samet

[On the nursing imagery, vs meat request]. But what is important in the parallel between the two questions is neither their linguistic nor their compositional similarity, but rather the harshly grotesque contrast between them. The image of a young infant at his mother's breast is an idyllic one, full of gentleness. More even than the infant wishes to suckle, the mother wishes to nurse him. The infant himself is helpless, unable to voice his wish to his mother, while the mother's milk is within herself, ready to be given to him. If the relationship between Moshe and the nation was like this, the monologue would arouse no identification with Moshe's complaint. But at the beginning of the second half the "infant" displays teeth, opens a demanding mouth and shouts at its "nurse" with hysterical crying of its multitudes, "Give us meat that we may eat!" The infant, hungry for its mother's MILK in the first half, has undergone an artistic metamorphosis and has become an angry nation demanding of its leader - its nurse – not to drink mother's milk but rather to EAT MEAT. And so the nurse asks, "From where do I have meat?"

f. The gathering and the spirit

This is a story of leadership in crisis, but not in the sense in which it is usually understood in a Western democracy, where such a crisis is generally the result of personal failure on the part of the leader or of a loss of faith in him on the part of his nation. The crisis in our story arises from fundamentally opposite circumstances - it is the leader who has lost faith in the nation, after the nation has revealed its heart's desires. In the face of such lowliness the leader feels that he has not the strength to lead onward a nation that does not share his vision and wishes to go backwards, to the "good" that was their lot in Egypt, to the fish that they ate there "for nothing."

The solution that Hashem proposes is seemingly a technical one - seventy men of the elders of Israel will share with Moshe the burden of the nation, and for this ... It is difficult to understand how this is actually going to help.

A hint at the solution to this question involves stylistic sensitivity to the guiding words that thread their way through our story. The key to the decline that appears in the nation lies in the "multitude": (4) "And the multitude that was in their midst lusted..." – this opens the story. It is this group that dragged the rest of the nation after it: "And ALSO Bnei Yisrael sat and cried."

What is hinted at in Hashem's response to Moshe is that corresponding to the 'asafuf' (multitude) that is lusting and drawing the nation after them, there must be an 'asefah' (gathering) of seventy elders who will serve as an opposing force. These will be "of the elders of Israel whom you know to be the elders of the nation and its officers" – the best and most upright of the nation, representing a consolidation and strengthening of positive public leadership for the nation and a counterweight to the influence of the 'multitude.' This is the reason why Hashem's response opens with the guiding word, "asefah li" – gather to Me seventy men...

Added to these two words which are built on the same root – asafuf-asefah – there is another "guiding pair of opposites" in our story. This combination is "basar" (flesh) and "ruah" (spirit) – a pair often juxtaposed in the Torah. It is the "spirit" that gives life to the flesh and without which it has no value (see, for example, Bereishit 6:17, Iyov 12:10). Here the "basar" refers to meat, meant for consumption.

The word "basar" is repeated three times in the first half of the story: once in unit a. (4) "Who will give us MEAT;" and twice in unit b., in Moshe's complaint (13) "From where do I have MEAT... that they cry to me saying, Give us MEAT that we may eat."

Corresponding to the desire to eat meat, which originates in the multitude, the spirit must be strengthened as an opposing force, by gathering the seventy elders...

Hashem is hinting to Moshe here that first the nation must be dealt with in a constructive way. The formal point of departure is indeed Moshe's personal complaint, but in Hashem's response this becomes a platform for the elevation of the nation's spirit through the consolidation of a broad leadership of seventy elders, who will acquire some of Moshe's spirit.

Moshe feels that he cannot deal with the nation that is so distant from him and bridge the abyss that exists between them. Hashem's response is that he indeed needs a bridge between himself and the nation. These seventy elders are on one hand authentic representatives of the nation, among "the elders of the nation and its officers," but on the other hand some of Moshe's spirit will rest upon them, and so they will be able to draw the nation after Moshe's spirit instead of them being drawn after the multitude in their midst.

g. Eldad and Meidad

...Many commentators ask how this scene, the story of Eldad and Meidad in pesukim 26-29, is related to the general narrative and what it comes to teach us. An answer is not difficult to find, if we follow the reasoning of our analysis thus far: this scene puts Moshe to the test....

If Moshe had perceived Hashem's command that he gather seventy elders as merely technical assistance to his leadership, as nothing but a formal response to his complaint that he could not bear the burden of the nation alone, perhaps he too would have shared the perception of the messenger and of Yehoshua. The prophesying of Eldad and Meidad was not a form of assistance to Moshe's leadership, but rather presented a threat to it.

But Moshe's response reveals a different understanding of the Divine intention: Hashem meant to provide not technical assistance but rather a strengthening of the spirit of the NATION, a creation of a group of spiritual people who would prophecy and thereby influence the spirit of the nation against the influence of the multitude lusting for meat. Therefore he answers Yehoshua, (29) "Are you zealous for me? If only all of Hashem's nation were prophets, that Hashem would give His spirit upon them."

The word "spirit" is repeated four times in this unit. Its first three appearances it refers to Moshe, but the fourth time, in pasuk 29, Moshe is speaking of HASHEM'S spirit being given to all of the nation. There is a complete release here from the perception that the resting of Moshe's spirit on the gathering of the elders is meant to ease Moshe's burden of bearing the nation.

This unit concludes with the root "a-s-f," the same way that it commenced: (30) And Moshe was gathered to the

camp, he and the elders of Israel."

What does this pasuk come to add? The same message. It teaches us that the entire significance of the resting of the spirit upon the elders is not so that they will serve as an advisory and assistant body to Moshe. If this had been the case, they could have remained next to the Ohel. The whole point is that they return to the camp together with Moshe, in order to influence, to educate and to serve as a counterweight to the "multitude in their midst."

h. Epilogue

What is the lesson of our story? It seems that it is meant to teach us how a leader should behave in the face of a wild following without vision that rejects his values and desires meat. In response to Moshe's despair and helplessness Hashem proposes an alternative that contains no innovation, but is nevertheless the best solution: an attempt must be made to make the "spirit" prevail over the "flesh;" an "asefah" must be established to counteract the "asafuf."

6. Sanhedrin 17a:4-6

ת"ר (במדבר יא, כו) וישארו שני אנשים במחנה יש אומרים בקלפי נשתיירו שבשעה שאמר לו הקב"ה למשה אספה לי שבעים איש מזקני ישראל אמר משה כיצד אעשה אברור ששה מכל שבט ושבט נמצאו שנים יתירים אברור חמשה חמשה מכל שבט ושבט נמצאו עשרה חסרים אברור ששה משבט זה וחמשה משבט זה הריני מטיל קנאה בין השבטים מה עשה בירר ששה וששה ויהי שבעים ושנים פיתקין על שבעים כתב זקן ושנים הניח חלק בללן ונתנן בקלפי אמר להם בואו וטלו פיתקיכם כל מי שעלה בידו זקן אמר כבר קידשך שמים מי שעלה בידו חלק אמר המקום לא חפץ בכך אני מה אעשה לך

§ Apropos the appointment of the Elders by Moses, the Gemara discusses additional aspects of that event. There were seventy-two candidates for Elder but only seventy were needed. They were chosen by lots with their names put into a box. **The Sages taught:** The verse states: **“And there remained two men in the camp;** the name of one was Eldad and the name of the other Medad, and the spirit rested upon them, and they were among those who were written but who did not go out to the tent, and they prophesied in the camp” (Numbers 11:26). Where did they remain? **Some say this means they,** i.e., their names, **remained** excluded from those selected from the lots **in the box.** The *baraita* explains: **At the time that the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses: “Gather for Me seventy men of the Elders of Israel”** (Numbers 11:16), **Moses said: How shall I do it? If I select six from each and every tribe, there will be a total of seventy-two, which will be two extra. But if I select five from each and every tribe, there will be a total of sixty, lacking ten. And if I select six from this tribe and five from that tribe, I will bring about envy between the tribes,** as those with fewer representatives will resent the others. **What did he do? He selected six from every tribe and he brought seventy-two slips [pitakin]. On seventy of them he wrote: Elder, and he left two of them blank. He mixed them and placed them in the box. He then said to the seventy-two chosen candidates: Come and draw your slips. Everyone whose hand drew up a slip that said: Elder, he said to him: Heaven has already sanctified you. And everyone whose hand drew up a blank slip, he said to him: The Omnipresent does not desire you; what can I do for you?**

7. Sanhedrin 17a:9-16

רבי שמעון אמר במחנה נשתיירו בשעה שאמר לו הקב"ה למשה אספה לי שבעים איש אמרו אלדד ומידד אין אנו ראוין לאותה גדולה אמר הקב"ה הואיל ומיעטתם עצמכם הריני מוסיף גדולה על גדולתכם ומה גדולה הוסיף להם שהנביאים כולן נתבאו ופסקו והם נתבאו ולא פסקו ומה נבואה נתבאו אמרו משה מת יהושע מכניס את ישראל לארץ אבא חנין אומר משום רבי אליעזר על עסקי שליו הן מתנבאים עלי שליו עלי שליו רב נחמן אמר על עסקי גוג ומגוג היו מתנבאין שנאמר (יחזקאל לח, ג) כה אמר ה' אלקים האתה הוא אשר דברתי בימים קדמונים ביד עבדי נביאי ישראל הנבאים בימים ההם להביא אותך עליהם וגו' אל תיקרי שנים אלא שנים ואיזו הן שנים נביאים שנתבאו בפרק אחד נבואה אחת הוי אומר אלדד ומידד אמר מר כל הנביאים כולן נתבאו ופסקו והן נתבאו ולא פסקו מנא לן דפסקו אילימא מדכתיב (במדבר יא, כה) ויתבאו ולא יספו אלא מעתה (דברים ה, יח) קול גדול ולא יסף ה"נ דלא אוסיף הוא אלא דלא פסק הוא אלא הכא כתיב ויתבאו התם כתיב (במדבר יא, כז) מתנבאים עדיין מתנבאים והולכים בשלמא למ"ד משה מת היינו דכתיב (במדבר יא, כח) אדוני משה כלאם אלא למ"ד הנך תרתי מאי אדושים משה כלאם דלאו אורח ארעא דהוה ליה כתלמיד המורה הלכה לפני רבו בשלמא למ"ד הנך תרתי היינו דכתיב מי יתן אלא למ"ד משה מת מינח הוה ניהא ליה לא סיימוה קמיה מאי כלאם א"ל הטל עליהן צרכי ציבור והן כלין מאילהן:

Rabbi Shimon says: Eldad and Medad **remained in the camp,** as they did not want to come to the lottery for the Elders. **At the time that the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses: Gather for me seventy Elders, Eldad and Medad said: We are not fitting for that level of greatness;** we are not worthy of being appointed among the Elders. **The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: Since you have made yourselves humble, I will add greatness to your greatness. And what is the greatness that he added to them?** It was **that all of the prophets,** meaning the other Elders, who were given prophecy, **prophesied** for a time **and then stopped** prophesying, **but they prophesied and did not stop.** Apropos Eldad and Medad being prophets, the Gemara asks: **And what prophecy did they prophesy? They said: Moses will die,** and **Joshua will bring the Jewish people into Eretz Yisrael.** Abba Hanin says in the name of Rabbi Eliezer: **They prophesied about the matter of the quail** that came afterward (Numbers 11:31–33), saying: **Arise quail, arise quail,** and then the quail came. **Rav Nahman says: They were prophesying about the matter of Gog and Magog, as it is stated** with regard to Gog and Magog: **“So says the Lord God: Are you the one of whom I spoke in ancient days,**

through my servants, the prophets of Israel, who prophesied in those days for many years [*shanim*] that I would bring you against them?” (Ezekiel 38:17). Do not read it as: “Years [*shanim*]”; rather, read it as: Two [*shenayim*]. And who are the two prophets who prophesied the same prophecy at the same time? You must say: Eldad and Medad. The Master says: The *baraita* said: All of the prophets prophesied and then stopped, but Eldad and Medad prophesied and did not stop. The Gemara asks: From where do we derive that the other prophets stopped prophesying? If we say it is from that which is written about them: “And they prophesied but they did so no more [*velo yasafu*]” (Numbers 11:25), that is difficult: But if that is so, then concerning that which is stated in relation to the giving of the Torah: “These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly... with a great voice, and it went on no more [*velo yasaf*]” (Deuteronomy 5:19), so too shall it be understood that the great voice did not continue? Rather, the intention there is that it did not stop, interpreting the word *yasafu* as related to *sof*, meaning: End. Consequently, with regard to the seventy Elders as well, the word can be interpreted to mean that they did not stop prophesying. Rather, the proof is as follows: It is written here with regard to the seventy Elders: “They prophesied” (Numbers 11:25), and it is written there: “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp” (Numbers 11:27), from which it can be derived that they were continuously prophesying. With regard to the content of Eldad and Medad’s prophecy, the Gemara asks: Granted, according to the one who says their prophecy was that Moses will die, this is the reason for that which is written there: “And Joshua, son of Nun, the servant of Moses from his youth, answered and said: My master Moses, imprison them” (Numbers 11:28), as their prophecy appeared to be a rebellion against Moses. But according to the one who says those other two opinions with regard to the content of the prophecy, according to which their prophecy had no connection to Moses, what is the reason that Joshua said: “My master Moses, imprison them”? The Gemara answers: He said this because it is not proper conduct for them to prophesy publicly in close proximity to Moses, as by doing so they are like a student who teaches a *halakha* in his teacher’s presence, which is inappropriate. The Gemara asks: Granted, according to the one who says those other two opinions, this is the reason for that which is written: “And Moses said to him: Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all of the Lord’s people were prophets” (Numbers 11:29). But according to the one who says that Eldad and Medad prophesied that Moses will die and Joshua will bring Israel into the land, would it have been satisfactory to Moses that all of the people of God would utter similar prophecies? The Gemara answers: They did not conclude it before him. Moses was not aware of what they had said, but only that they were prophesying. The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of: “Imprison them [*kela’em*]”? The Gemara answers: Joshua said to him: Place responsibility for the needs of the public upon them, so that they will be occupied like the other Elders of Israel and they will cease [*kalin*] prophesying, on their own. Due to the burden of public responsibility they would not be able to be prophets.

8. Numbers 12:1-2 (R. Twersky – leadership concern of Yehoshua is actualized)

(א) ונתדבר מרים ואהרן במלשה על־אדות האשה הכשית אשר לקח כִּי־אשה כשית לקח: (ב) ויאמרו הרק אד־במלשה דבר ה' הלא גם־כִּבְנו דבר וישמע יהוה:

(1) Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman he had married: “He married a Cushite woman!” (2) They said, “Has the LORD spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?” The LORD heard it.

9. Exodus 32:17-18 (Is Yehoshua going to be able to lead?)

(יז) וישמע יהושע את־קול העם ברעה ויאמר אל־משה קול מלחמה במחנה: (יח) ויאמר אין קול ענות גבורה ואין קול ענות חלושה קול ענות אנכי שמע:

(17) When Joshua heard the sound of the people in its boisterousness, he said to Moses, “There is a cry of war in the camp.” (18) But he answered, “It is not the sound of the tune of triumph, Or the sound of the tune of defeat; It is the sound of song that I hear!”

10. Kohelet Rabbah 9:11:1

וגם לא לידעים חן זה יהושע, אמר רבי אהנה בריה דרבי זירא שני דברים דבר יהושע בפני משה ולא נגמל חן בעיניו, ואלו הן, אחד במנוי הזקנים, ואחד במעשה העגל. במנוי הזקנים, דכתיב (במדבר יא, כח): אדושם משה פלאם, אמר לו פלם והעבירים מן העולם (במדבר יא, כח): ויאמר לו משה המקנא אתה לי, אמר לו יהושע בן אבי מתקנא, הלואי בני פיוצא בך, הלואי כל ישראל פיוצא בך (במדבר יא, כח): ומי יתן כל עם ה' נביאים וגו'. ואחד בעגל, שצאמר (שמות לב, יז): וישמע יהושע את קול העם ברעה, אמר לו משה, יהושע, אדם שעתיד להנהיג שררה על ששים רבוא אינו יודע להבחין בין קול לקול. אין קול ענות גבורה, האיד מה דאת אמר (שמות יז, יא): וגבר ישראל. ואין קול ענות חלושה, האיד מה דאת אמר: ונחלש יהושע. קול ענות אנכי שמע, אמר רבי אסי קול קילוס של עבודת פוכבים אנא שמיע. רבי יודן בשם רבי אסי אמר אין לה כל דור נדור שלא נטל אונקי אחת של עגל.