

# Prophecy in the camp...

Behalotcha 5782/2022

It is clear that Moshe realised, following his father in law's instruction about the legal system, that he would need help. In this week's Parasha he finds that help in the bestowing of prophetic insight onto the seventy elders. However, following the appointment of these elders, two men, Eldad and Meidad remain in the camp, and find themselves in a moment of prophecy. Joshua becomes concerned, and angry (we will get to the reason later), and Moshe shrugs it off <sup>1</sup>.

Rashi comments that due to their humility, where they realised that they were not worthy, yet remained committed, they were bestowed the gift of prophecy, and one that would be more long lasting than that of the seventy appointed elders<sup>2</sup>. The Sifrei comments similarly, going one step further by saying that they were so humble, that once they realised they had a gift, they went and hid, so that no one would know<sup>3</sup>.

Joshua comes running, requesting that Moshe locks them up, and Moshe responds that they are free to go. The Chizkuni tells us that Moshe didn't care that they were prophesying, as long as they would help him make his task easier<sup>4</sup>. Moshe displays the most incredible amount of humility, even as Rabeinu Bachya notes, that their prophecy dealt with Moshe explicitly, citing his future death in the desert, and not in the Land of Israel, which might lead to further complaints or distrust by the Jewish people. Moshe responds with a wish that God would give everyone prophecy<sup>5</sup>.

How can Moshe be so calm?

Moshe, as the Talmud in Sanhedrin notes, Moshe has been in a similar situation before. He has mistrusted the Jewish people, thinking that they would not believe him or follow him out of Egypt, and God responds to him, that the Jewish people are believers the children of believers<sup>6</sup>. Moshe's response is based in a similar vein, the Jewish people are believers, and therefore if they are receiving prophecy here (let's remember, they had already had a moment of prophecy in hearing God's voice at Sinai), then who is he to judge them and restrain them?

This idea of belief and hope in the Almighty is the very essence of what has sustained us for 2000 years in exile. It was the thing that kept us alive and functioning as a people, it is the very reason our anthem is called Hatikvah<sup>7</sup>. As Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks notes, at the centre of Judaism is the notion of belief, we have belief in God, but also in the incredible ability of humanity.

Eldad and Meidad made their choice to remain humble, both in their rejection and acceptance, and the Jewish people have made the choice to uphold faith and belief in God. We are and always have been a people of prophecy, and we are not scared of it forming within the camp. No one is the gate keeper to Jewish belief – all of us stood at Sinai, and all of us have the ability to commune with God!

All citations can be found in **A New Page of Talmud**