

Where's the Beef?

A lesson in eating humble pie from Parashah B'ha'alotkha
by Kevin Phipps

I think there is something fishy about a people who are saved from slavery in Egypt where they personally barbecued in the desert sun, making pyramids for a pharaoh, who liked to hog all the attention for himself. These same people choose to have a beef with God about the conditions they lived under in the desert. Personally, I would be too chicken for that.

However, God would teach these turkeys a lesson they would not soon forget. He would give them the meat they craved, but it would soon turn foul in their mouth. They would no longer have an appetite for rebellion, but be satisfied with a healthy serving of humble pie.

The following is a dramatic monologue consisting of a combination of various encouragements and chastisements found throughout God's Word. These words were directed to God's elite in Scripture, but relate to all of us who live as God's people in the world today. When I finish, we will all spend a few minutes in silent prayer before God. Perhaps you have not had your fill of manna and desire something different, but each one of us have concerns, complaints, issues of pride, and thanklessness before God. Some of them you may not even be aware of. Try thinking of your greatest gripe. Put it in the forefront of your mind. This is God's response:

“Who is this, darkening my plans with his ignorant words? Stand up like a man, and brace yourself; then answer me this:

Where were you when I founded the Earth? Tell me if you know so much. Do you know who determined its dimensions or who stretched the measuring line across it? On what were the bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Have you ever in your life called up the dawn and made the morning know its place, so that it could take hold of the edges of the Earth and shake the wicked out of it? Which way leads to where light has its home? And darkness, where does it dwell? If you knew, you could take each to its place and set it on its homeward path. You know, of course, because you were born then; by now you must be very old! Can you raise your voice to the clouds and make them cover you with a flood of rain? Can you send lightning bolts on their way? Will they say to you, “Here we are!”? Who put wisdom in people's inner parts? Who gave understanding to the mind? Who provides food for the raven when his young cry out to God and wander about for lack of food?

When you look at my heavens, the works of my fingers, the moon and stars that I set in place – what are you that I should concern myself with a mere human, and watch over you with such care? I made you a little lower than the angels, and crowned you with glory and honor, I have you rule over what my hands have made and put everything under your feet!

I have probed you, and know you. I know when you sit and when you stand up. I discern your inclinations from afar, and scrutinize your daily activities. There is nowhere you can go to escape my Spirit or flee from my presence. I have fashioned your innermost being, and knit you together in your mother's womb. You are wonderfully and awesomely made and I have shaped your days before any of them ever existed. Before I formed you in the womb I knew

you; before you were born I separated you for myself. For you will go to whomever I send you, and you will speak whatever I order you. Do not be afraid for I am with you. I am your Rock, your fortress and deliverer, your God, your Rock in whom you find shelter, your shield, the power that saves you, your stronghold.

I am the bread, which is life! Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever trusts in me will never be thirsty. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light, which gives life. I am the gate; if someone enters through me, he will be safe and will go in and out and find pasture. Through me you will have life, life in its fullest measure. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. I am the Way and the Truth! I am the Resurrection and the Life! Whoever puts his trust in me will live even if he dies; and everyone living and trusting in me will never die. I am preparing a place for you and will one day come to take you with me; so that where I am, you may be also. Now, I am the vine and you are the branches. Those who stay united with me and I with them are the ones who bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing!

Why do you complain, Ya'akov; why do you say, Isra'el, 'My way is hidden from YHVH, my rights are ignored by my God'? Haven't you known, haven't you heard that the everlasting God, YHVH, the Creator of the ends of the earth, does not grow tired or weary? His understanding cannot be fathomed. He invigorates the exhausted, he gives strength to the powerless. Young men may grow tired and weary, even the fittest may stumble and fall; but those who hope in YHVH will renew their strength, they will soar aloft as with eagles' wings; when they are running they won't grow weary, when they are walking they won't get tired. 'But you, Isra'el, my servant; Ya'akov, whom I have chosen, descendants of Avraham my friend, I have taken you from the ends of the earth, summoned you from its most distant parts and said to you, 'You are my servant' - I have chosen you, not rejected you. Don't be afraid, for I am with you; don't be distressed, for I am your God. I give you strength, I give you help, I support you with my victorious right hand. All those who were angry with you will be disgraced, put to shame; those who fought against you will be destroyed, brought to nothing.

You will seek them but not find them, those who contended with you; yes, those who made war with you will be brought to nothing, nothing at all. 'I, YHVH, called you righteously, I took hold of you by the hand, I shaped you and made you a covenant for the people, to be a light for the Goyim, so that you can open blind eyes, free the prisoners from confinement, those living in darkness from the dungeon. I am YHVH; that is my name. I yield my glory to no one else, nor my praise to any idol. See how the former predictions come true; and now new things do I declare. But now this is what YHVH says, he who created you, Ya'akov, he who formed you, Isra'el: 'Don't be afraid, for I have redeemed you; I am calling you by your name; you are mine. When you pass through water, I will be with you; when you pass through rivers, they will not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire, you will not be scorched - the flame will not burn you. For I am YHVH, your God, the Holy One of Isra'el, your Savior. There is no other God besides me, a just God and a Savior; there is none besides me. Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God; there is no other. In the name of myself I have sworn, from my mouth has rightly gone out, a word that will not return - that to me every knee will bow and every tongue will swear about me that only in YHVH are justice and strength.' Thus says YHVH, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Isra'el: 'I am YHVH, your God, who teaches you for your own good, who guides you on the path you should take. If only you would heed my mitzvot! Then your peace would flow on like a river,

and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Your descendants would be numerous as the sand, your offspring countless as its grains. Your name would never be cut off or destroyed from my presence."

Today I have placed you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and to tear down, to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant. The wise man should not boast of his wisdom, the powerful should not boast of his wealth; instead, let the boaster boast about this; that he understands and knows me – I am Adonai, practicing grace, justice and righteousness in the land; for in these things I take pleasure.

As you go throughout the world, proclaim the Good News to all creation. Whoever trusts and is immersed will be saved; whoever does not trust will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who do trust; in my name you will drive out demons, speak with new tongues, not be injured if you handle snakes or drink poison, heal the sick by laying hands on them, and bare witness to my deliverance with various other signs, wonders and miracles, and with gifts of the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) which he distributes as he chooses. Use all the armor and weaponry that I provide, so that you will be able to stand against the deceptive tactics of the Adversary. For we are not struggling against human beings, but against the rulers, authorities and cosmic powers governing this darkness, against the spiritual forces in the heavenly realm. So take up every piece of war equipment I provide, so that when the evil day comes, you will be able to resist; and when the battle is won you will still be standing. You can do all things through my power.

I am the Alef (Alpha) and the Tav (Omega), the beginning and the end, the One who is, who was, and is yet to come. All else is a vanity of vanities. Fear me and keep my Torah, act justly, love grace, and walk in purity with me.

So don't be anxious about anything, asking, "What will we eat?" "What will we drink?" or "How will we be clothed?" For it is the pagans who set their hearts on all these things. I know you need them all. But seek first my Kingdom and my righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Don't worry about tomorrow – Tomorrow will worry about itself!

Grace and shalom to you, and never forget that I love you!

~God~

[The following Scriptures were used to create this monologue: Job 38; Ps.8:5-6; 18; 139; Isa.40; 41; 42; 43; 45; 48; Jn.6:35, 51; 8:12; 10:9,11,36; 11:25; 14:3,6; 15:5; Rev.1:8; Jer.1; 9:24; Mark 16; Heb.2:4; Eph.6; Php.4:13; Ecc.12; Mic.6:8; Mt.6:31-34