This week's section tells us of how the Jews completed the exodus from Egypt by crossing the "Yam Suf" (Red Sea) that split for them and then drowned the entire Egyptian army.

Then the Torah tells us that in addition to freedom they became fabulously rich from the precious gems that washed up on the shores (see Rashi 15:22). And a few weeks later G-d miraculously gave them Manna from heaven to nourish them for the next 40 years.

But later we will learn that the Jews rebelled precisely because of these very things. They complained bitterly about the freedom and wanted to return to Egypt. They rebelled over the Manna and wanted meat. And from the gold they actually made a golden calf!

What went wrong?

To understand this, here is a story about the previous (sixth) Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Shneerson, (1880-1950) who passed away on the Tenth (Yud) of Shvat sixty four years ago as of this writing.

When Yosef Yitzchak was just a lad of eleven he besides showing unusual mental genius he demonstrated even a more unique genius of heart.

For example he had a free-loan fund of about sixty rubles, money given to him by his father, the holy Fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Shalom Dov-Ber, for each Jewish law (Mishna) he memorized, which he freely loaned without interest to Jews in need; Especially on market day.

He got great pleasure from going once a week to the marketplace to make new loans and collect (from those who could pay) or extend (to those who couldn't) old ones. But what he especially loved was to be near the simple shopkeepers and learn from their simple and wholesome belief in the Creator.

One Jew that he especially liked was Dovid the butcher. Dovid was about fifty years old and although he was almost totally illiterate he always had a blessing on his lips and a smile revealing a set of white shining teeth in contrast to his dirty-blacked face earning him the nickname "Baal HaSheniem", "Mister Teeth".

Dovid mostly made his livelihood from buying and selling livestock, especially kosher ones but in addition, he was strong and healthy and would do any sort of honest work no matter how menial or difficult, to earn a few more pennies to feed his wife and four children

One market day young Yosef Yitzchak saw Dovid walking happily through the street a basket of chickens hanging from his neck, a sheep under his arm, and a young calf on his broad shoulders.

"Hello!" shouted Dovid with a smile, unable to wave because his arms were full, "Hope to G-d I'll make a nice profit off these!"
Yosef Yitzchak waved back when suddenly from nowhere one of the local policemen, ran up to Dovid, grabbed him by the shirt and punched him full force in the face!

Poor Dovid staggered backward blood running from his nose as the policeman prepared to give him another blow.

Now this was no simple matter. The local police were the ultimate power in the area and everyone was petrified of them. In fact, if a Jew saw a policeman he would always move to the other side of the street from sheer trepidation.

But these thoughts never entered little Yosef Yitzchak's mind. Fearlessly and instinctively he ran toward the officer, and pushed him away from Dovid with all his might almost knocking him over while yelling "Drunkard! Disgusting Pig! Leave him alone!!"

The startled policeman, who was four times as big as the little boy, was totally taken by surprise. And when he regained his balance he turned his wrath on the lad. "Grab him! Take him to the jail!" He screamed to another policeman that appeared on the scene. "Look! He tore my prize medal from my jacket." (Which was a lie).

His colleague grabbed the boy by the neck and rushed him through the crowd to the jailhouse where he was greeted with curses and shouting by the jailer on duty who slapped him in the face, grabbed his ear, led him down a corridor to a metal door, opened it revealing a pitch black room, pushed him in and slammed the door shut behind him.

Later Yosef Yitzchak related: "At first I was shaking with fear. What would become of me, a young boy sitting in a black dungeon in the midst of seasoned criminals?

"But then suddenly I became filled with pride. I was sitting in prison because I helped a Jew. I risked my life for the truth just like Abraham and all the Jews after him, my forefathers!

"Suddenly a muffled moaning and thrashing from a side of the room disturbed my pleasant thoughts. Fear again entered my heart. I had no idea what it was, (perhaps a dying man?) because the room was without light. I called out, but there was no answer, only more thrashing. So I sat in the dark and thought to myself that instead of being afraid, I should do something positive.

"I decided to recite the laws (Mishnaos) I had learned by heart. I thanked G-d that my father encouraged me to learn so much, and after an hour or so I finished all Seder Zeroim.

"The Torah I learned made me stronger and now my trust was completely in G-d that everything would turn out for the best. I felt calm enough that I was able to stand and pray the afternoon prayer with great happiness.

"When I finished I sat back down to continue reciting (I knew all of the Moed section as well) and then I heard that moaning again. It was then I remembered that I had a box of matches in my pocket that I was supposed to deliver to someone in the market, but because of what happened I wasn't able to.

"I took out the box, struck a match, and in the flickering yellow light I saw what was making the noise. It was a calf tied up and gagged lying in the corner, but it wasn't the same one that Dovid was carrying when I met him in the market. It was a different one.

"Relieved that it wasn't a person, I sat back down in the dark and resumed my recitation and about an hour later the door opened. It was the jailer again but this time
he had a lamp in his hand and acted differently... like another man."

"He entered, took my hand and helped me to stand. 'Forgive me!' he said, almost whining, 'I didn't know that you are the nephew of Rabbi Zalman Aharon' (My father's brother who was respected by even the highest officials because of his wisdom and talents). 'And please forgive that slap I gave you. After all I didn't break any of your teeth or anything. I'm so used to hardened criminals that I'm sort of hardened myself etc.'

"I was led out of the cell to a room where Dovid, his nose and face all swollen, was standing before some officer that I supposed was the captain of the station while the policeman that punched him was accusing him of stealing the calf and two others were saying it wasn't so; they saw him buy the calf earlier.

A few minutes later I was taken to the exit, released and met outside by one of my uncle's helpers, and when I told him of what happened and of the gagged calf that shared my prison room, he returned to the station and ordered an investigation. A few minutes later the truth was revealed; the policeman had stolen that calf earlier in the day from someone else and hid it in the prison room (thinking that no one would reveal it) hoping to sell it that evening. When he saw Dovid carrying another calf he thought he could pin the one he stole on him and maybe get Dovid's calf as well.

It was a foolish plan. The policeman was arrested (and finally was fired and sentenced to jail). The captain apologized to Dovid and later my father gave me a reward for being so devoted to giving charity and for risking my life to help others.

That was the first time I sat in prison."

(Afterwards the Rebbe was imprisoned by the Communists six more times, the last of which was a death sentence fro which he was miraculously released on the 12th of Tammuz 1927)

This answers our question; why did the Jews complain about G-d's miracles?

True, the Jews had everything in the desert; freedom, riches, food, security. But they were missing something very important; self sacrifice. There was no need to give of themselves or to risk their lives for the truth!

And because they didn't go 'beyond' themselves, which is the essence of Judaism (as Rabbi Akiva said, "Loving others as yourself is the whole Torah") they became selfish and used to ..... receiving.

So even the biggest miracles couldn't satisfy them; they always wanted more and had no problem complaining when they didn't receive it.

Especially when they thought that Moses died and they were in danger of losing everything! Then they grabbed at the first thing that promised them security and made an idol from gold.

If so, we can ask a question. Mimonedies says in the end of his Masterwork "Mishna Torah" that all Judaism is aimed at bringing the Moshiac who will bring material utopia to the world; There will be no hunger, war etc. and there will be such plenty that nothing will be lacking.

Perhaps this is undesirable? Won't it bring to the same selfishness as it did to the Jews in the desert?

The answer however is simple: The reason G-d gave the Jews all their needs (including riches) in the desert was so they should turn their attention totally to Him.
As it says about the Manna (Deut. 8:3) "G-d tortured you and starved you by giving you Manna." Namely when they saw how G-d miraculously and mysteriously provided Manna it was supposed to 'torture' and "starve" the Jews to not be satisfied with just receiving but want to devote and surrender themselves totally to revealing the SOURCE of these miracles in this physical world.

So Moshiach will teach the entire world to hunger only for truth; just as little Yosef Yitzchak of our story did when he later became the Lubavitcher Rebbe (from 1920 till his passing) spreading wisdom, love and meaning throughout the world. And as his successor Rabbi Menachem Mendel (Who began on Yud Shvat 1951) is doing till this very day through his followers: everything possible to bring Moshiach NOW!

Then, as the Maimonides says man will realize his true potential filling the world with blessing, joy and meaning.

But it all depends on our good deeds and acts of charity and kindness now. Even one more good deed, word or thought especially if done with self-sacrifice for the truth can tilt the scales to bring.....

Moshiach NOW!!

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