

The Nostalgic Egyptian Fish: The Good and the Bad of Reminiscing

Source Sheet by Rabbi Naftali Rothstein, NYHS

Numbers 11:1-6

(1) The people took to complaining bitterly before the LORD. The LORD heard and was incensed: a fire of the LORD broke out against them, ravaging the outskirts of the camp. (2) The people cried out to Moses. Moses prayed to the LORD, and the fire died down. (3) That place was named Taberah, because a fire of the LORD had broken out against them. (4) The riffraff in their midst felt a gluttonous craving; and then the Israelites wept and said, “If only we had meat to eat! (5) We remember the fish that we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. (6) Now our gullets are shriveled. There is nothing at all! Nothing but this manna to look to!”

Numbers 11:14-15

(14) I cannot carry all this people by myself, for it is too much for me.
(15) If You would deal thus with

במדבר י"א:א-ו'

(א) וַיְהִי הָעָם כְּמִתְאַנְנִים רָע
בְּאָזְנֵי יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה וַיִּחַר אַפּוֹ
וַתִּבְעַר-בָּם אֵשׁ יְהוָה וַתֹּאכַל
בְּקִצָּה הַמַּחֲנֶה: (ב) וַיִּצְעַק הָעָם
אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל מֹשֶׁה אֶל-יְהוָה
וַתִּשְׁקַע הָאֵשׁ: (ג) וַיִּקְרָא
שֵׁם-הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא תִּבְעֵרָה
כִּי-בִעַרָה בָּם אֵשׁ יְהוָה: (ד)
וְהָאִסְפָּסֹף אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבּוֹ הִתְאוּ-
וּ וַיִּשְׁבוּ וַיִּבְכּוּ וַיִּגְמֵ בְנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ מִי יֵאָכְלֵנוּ בָּשָׂר:
(ה) זָכַרְנוּ אֶת-הַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר-נֹאכַל
בְּמִצְרַיִם חֲנָם אֶת הַקִּשְׂאִים וְאֶת
הָאֲבִטְחִים וְאֶת-הַחֲצִיר
וְאֶת-הַבִּצְלִים וְאֶת-הַשּׁוּמִים: (ו)
וְעַתָּה נַפְשֵׁנוּ יִבְשֶׁה אֵין כֹּל בְּלִתֵּי
אֶל-הַמָּן עֵינֵינוּ:

במדבר י"א:י"ד-ט"ו

(י"ד) לֹא-אוּכַל אֲנִכִּי לְבַדִּי לְשָׂאת
אֶת-כָּל-הָעָם הַזֶּה כִּי כָבֵד מִמֶּנִּי:

me, kill me rather, I beg You, and let me see no more of my wretchedness!”

(טו) וְאִם-כָּכָה | אֶת-עֲשֵׂה לִי
הֲרַגְנִי נָא הָרֹג אִם-מִצְאֵתִי חַן
בְּעֵינַיִךְ וְאֶל-אַרְאֶה בְּרַעְתִּי: (פ)

Numbers 11:32-34

(32) The people set to gathering quail all that day and night and all the next day—even he who gathered least had ten homers—and they spread them out all around the camp. (33) The meat was still between their teeth, nor yet chewed, when the anger of the LORD blazed forth against the people and the LORD struck the people with a very severe plague. (34) That place was named Kibroth-hattaavah, because the people who had the craving were buried there.

במדבר י"א:ל"ב-ל"ד

(לב) וַיִּקְמוּ הָעָם כָּל-הַיּוֹם הַהוּא
וְכָל-הַלַּיְלָה וְכָל | יוֹם הַמָּחָרֹת
וַיֹּאסְפוּ אֶת-הַשְּׂלֹו הַמִּמַּעֵיט אֶסְף
עֲשָׂרָה חֲמָרִים וַיִּשְׂטְחוּ לָהֶם
שְׂטוּחַ סְבִיבוֹת הַמַּחֲנֶה: (לג)
הַבָּשָׂר עוֹדְנוּ בֵּין שְׁנֵיהֶם טָרֵם
יָכַרְתָּ וְאַף יְהוָה חָרָה בָּעָם וַיַּךְ
יְהוָה בָּעָם מַכָּה רַבָּה מְאֹד: (לד)
וַיִּקְרָא אֶת-שֵׁם-הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא
קִבְרוֹת הַתְּאֻוָּה כִּי-שָׁם קִבְרוּ
אֶת-הָעָם הַמִּתְאַוִּים:

Netivot Shalom, "And the People took to complaining"

וַיִּלְהַעֲנִין. ע"פ מש"כ בספה"ק שכל תרי"ג
מצוות הם הכנה למצות ואהבת את ה' אלקיך ולדבקה
בו, שתכלית כל המצוות היא שיהודי יהיה דבוק
בהש"ת, וכל תרי"ג מצוות הם עצות ודרכים להביאו
לדביקות בה'. ובעבודת ישראל (אבות פ"ג) מביא

ועפ"ז י"ל הפרשה, מה היתה החומרה המיוחדת
בחטאים של ישראל במדבר, בחטא המתאוננים
ובחטא ויתאו תאוה, שלכאורה אינם חטאים חמורים
כ"כ. אלא כי הקביעה מהו חטא חמור תלויה בדבר
אחד, עד כמה הוא מרחיק מהשי"ת, שככל שהחטא
מרחיק יותר מהשי"ת וככל שהוא יותר בניגוד
לדביקות בהשי"ת הר"ז חטא יותר חמור. וזה היה

Pileggi Pawelski, Suzann. Happy Together (pp. 119-120). Penguin Publishing Group.

While it's important for couples to cope during the tough times and work to fix problems that arise, Gable has found that **the way couples respond to each other's good news may be more important to their relationship quality than their response to negative situations.**

Flourishing couples do well at acknowledging, calling out, and savoring things that are going well in their relationship and with each other. Be it something small, such as a good deed their partner has done for them, or something big such as a promotion, **those couples who respond supportively to good news** (practicing what Gable calls "active, constructive responding," or ACR) **increase their chances of having a healthier and more lasting and fulfilling relationship.**

Additionally, Gable found that a passive and unengaged response to a romantic partner's good news, with a comment such as **"That's nice,**

sweetheart,” and then returning to the newspaper or whatever you were previously doing, is almost as detrimental to a relationship as ignoring or directly criticizing a partner’s good news.

**Pileggi Pawelski, Suzann. Happy Together (p. 111).
Penguin Publishing Group.**

Reminiscing can be a powerful way to continue the enjoyment of positive experiences long after they are gone. Taking the time to enter as fully as we can into the memories of those experiences can actually allow us to feel all over again some of the positive emotions they originally created in us.

Bryant and Veroff point out, however, that there are more and less adaptive ways of savoring the past. Some participants in their studies reported being motivated to reminisce by a desire to escape the difficulties of the present. By thinking back to a happier time in their lives, they could take a break from their current problems and experience some of the positive emotions from their past.

Unfortunately, though, a return to the present brought a return of their problems. **And the contrast between the joys of the past and the troubles of the present actually made them feel worse than before they had engaged in the reminiscing.** This may motivate some people not to want to return to the present at all and instead live their lives as much as possible in the past.

Bryant and Veroff have found that in contrast to these maladaptive approaches to savoring, many people reminisce in order to gain perspective and self-insight and to strengthen their identity. By reliving past positive experiences, **we can learn from them about what helps us thrive, and we can bring what we learn into the present to help improve our current situation.**

Reminiscing can also **reconnect us with who we are**—with where we came from, who has been important in our lives, and what our values are.

Instead of an escape *from* reality, this type of reminiscing is an escape *to* reality. It is not only pleasant in itself, but it can also bring lasting benefits.

Pileggi Pawelski, Suzann. Happy Together (p. 119-120). Penguin Publishing Group.

Gottman suggests thinking back to the things you valued in your partner in the past. This can be a way of reminding yourself of the good things in your partner and **helping you know where to look for them in the present.** In essence, he is saying that **savoring the past in your relationship can be a way of sparking your savoring of the present....**

As we mentioned in chapter 1, we have evolved to be especially sensitive to problems. When we have a problem, we typically know it, because problems scream at us. Opportunities and other good things typically just whisper and often fade into the background.

Even though people report having far more positive than negative things happen to them (as many as three times more, according to one study), we often tend to focus more on the negative things. For this reason, it can be easy to lose sight of the many good things in our relationship. **This is why Gable recommends making sure to celebrate the good times and the good things our partners do.**

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