

RADIO PROGRAM - NUMBERS
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

Shalom. Lately I have encountered many, many people who cannot cope at all with their problems. They just do not seem to know how to handle responsibility. In fact, there seems to be a paradox here. Many of these people are highly educated, and it seems that their education has not allowed them to learn how to solve their problems and to cope with life, and some of the people who do not have as much education as these people seem to be doing a much better job of coping with life. How are we to understand this? What's going on here? What's working?

In the Bible in the Book of Numbers we learn about a curious incident. We learn how Moses was beset by the Jewish people who came upon him and claimed, "Moses, you must do something. We want meat. We are tired of this manna that comes from G-d from the heaven. Give us meat." Moses could not stand it any longer and he turned to G-d and said, "What do these people want from me? I'm just tired of this whole leadership. I just can't take it anymore." G-d turned to Moses and said, "Moses, set up for yourself 70 elders, a parliament, and everything will be all right, and I will supply you meat, too." And that satisfied Moses and the people. How could this be? The people were asking for meat, and G-d said, "Set up a council of 70 elders and everything will be fine." What does one thing have to do with another? Also, right before this in the same chapters of the Bible we learn how another group of people approach Moses and complain because they were neglected. They had come into contact with the dead and, therefore, were not able in those days (not in our days) to bring the Passover offering, so they asked Moses, "What can we do?" Moses had to go consult G-d.

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It seems to me that what we have recounted here in the Bible are two instances of Moses' failure of leadership. Moses should have been a different kind of leader at this particular junction. G-d, through His advice, told Moses what he was doing wrong. Moses, unfortunately, was making the mistake that I think many, many parents and people make today, and that is that he failed to teach the people a sense of responsibility. The Hebrew word for the people's complaints here is "Misononeem - pretext". They are complaining but they don't really know what they are complaining about. They are just looking for a pretext to complain. They are unhappy so that's why they are complaining. The reason the people were complaining was because they did not know how to cope with their problems. Moses had made a mistake which is common today. He either tried to solve all their problems, or he neglected them. This, unfortunately, I think is the story of many parents today. Either they want to do everything for their child or they do nothing for their child. It's an either/or situation which I find very difficult to understand. How many times have I seen parents says, "Oh, my child does not have to give charity. I have already given charity. My child should visit the sick? No, I'll do that for him. My children should go to a funeral? Oh, no, I'll do that, too." They do not want to give the child any sense of responsibility, even in the family. My child should contribute a little to the family? Oh, no, no, no, I'll do that for them. No sense of responsibility do they give the child at all or just the opposite. They neglect them and say, "You do your thing, and I'll do my thing." Of course, that is not teaching a child responsibility either. Teaching a child responsibility is when a child does something for the parent that the parent needs, and if the parent does not get it, then the parent suffers. That is responsibility. Otherwise, it is just neglect. Let

the child, no matter how cold it is, go to school by himself. Let the child try to figure out everything for himself. Never inquire about how his schoolwork is going. Never be concerned about where he is at night. There seem to be two different kinds of parents here, and both of them are wrong.

The rabbis say that right interspersed in this same reading from the Bible we learn how Moses was to have his own trumpets when he called the people together. These trumpets were to be only his. At his death, Joshua had to have his own trumpets, and the other leaders had to have their own trumpets. Why should this be? The rabbis say this should be because responsibility cannot be handed down father to son. It is not an inheritance. People have to learn it, and they have to learn how to call the people to their own responsibility and how to call especially themselves to their own responsibility. Unless this is taught people are not going to learn it. This is very important, and, unfortunately, this has many times been neglected, that the important thing in life is to teach your children how to have a sense of self-respect, and they will not have a sense of self-respect unless they are taught responsibility. They will become nothing but moochers, takers, takers, takers, because they will not know how to give, and they will be unhappy with themselves and will not be able to cope with their problems because you have not taught them how to give. You have not taught them to have this internal self-respect that everyone needs, and because they will not have this internal self-respect, they will not love each other and care for themselves, and that is important. Unless a person respects himself, then a person cannot solve his own problems, and a person who is only a taker and is never given the opportunity to give will be such a person.

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In the Bible we also learn that when Aaron was to light the candelabra, the light of religion, he was to stand on a stool. The rabbis ask, why should Aaron have to stand on a stool? After all, the candelabra was only a little over four and a half feet. Why should he have to stand on a stool? In fact, the rabbis say Aaron really did not even have to light the light. He only had to fix the wicks. The reason I believe Aaron had to stand on a stool was not for Aaron but so he could bring his children on the stool and they could help him light each light. If you want your child to be able to solve his problems in life, then you must teach him responsibility and let him share with you in the lighting the light which guides the world.