

Potomac Torah Study Center
Vol. 8 #32, May 28, 2021; Behaalotecha 5781

NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his recent untimely death.

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah.

Mazel Tov to Gail & Bill Landau on the birth of a grandson, and to the proud parents, Liz & LT Andy Zittrauer, USN.

Mazel-Tov to Rabbi Yehoshua and Serena Singer of Am HaTorah Congregation in Bethesda, MD, on the Bar Mitzvah of their oldest son, Nachi, on Shabbat.

Mazel-Tov to Amollia Antine on her Bat Mitzvah this Shabbas at Beth Sholom Congregation. Mazel-Tov also to siblings Johanna & Reuven; parents Rabbi Nissan & Sarah Antine; and grandparents David & Susan Antine, Susan Case & Tom Hausman, and John & Kumza Case.

Mazel-Tov to Avraham Rosen on the first anniversary of his Bar Mitzvah (Naso 5780), a small ceremony during the pandemic in the family's new community of Carmiel, in the Galil. Mazel-Tov also to his parents Rabbi Yosef and Hedva Rosen, siblings Yohanan, Eliezer, Yehoshua, Shalom, & Hadassah and grandparents.

Behaalotecha opens approaching a wonderful climax. God has returned His presence to the midst of B'Nai Yisrael, with His presence above the Ark in the center of the Mishkan. He leads B'Nai Yisrael with a cloud by day and fire by night. All the preparations are complete, and B'Nai Yisrael start on the short journey from the base of Har Sinai to the land that Hashem has promised to our Patriarchs. The language shows this excitement. The Torah contains repeated words such as nasa and vayim – traveling and going forward. Repeatedly we read "tov" – all is good.

The sixth aliyah opens with two pasookim (sentences) in inverted nuns, giving the appearance of brackets. The text of Moshe's words describes how the God's presence would protect the people during the journey. Suddenly everything changes. The people start complaining, exhibit fear and depression, and search for a reason to complain (11:1). As the people leave the base of Har Sinai, the Mishkan is supposed to enable them to keep the Sinai experience with them. However, something is very wrong. God sends a divine fire to the edges of the camp to show His displeasure (11:1). This sign of divine displeasure does not stop the complaints. The mixed multitude accompanying B'Nai Yisrael instigate and encourage the complaints (11:4). The language in this section changes. We see repeated references to "ra" (evil) and mentions of gathering in (language of death that the Torah uses frequently, especially in Sefer Bereshis.

Moshe, who until this point had defended B'Nai Yisrael every time that God became angry and threatened them, now complains to Hashem that he cannot be like a mother or nurse maid to needy babies. This time, God responds by offering to help Moshe with the people. He says that Moshe should collect seventy elders, and He will share some of Moshe's divine ruach with them to take some of the burden of leadership.

A psychologist in our century might look at the situation and infer that many of the people were suffering from depression – a common disease that affects many Jews (as well as non-Jews). David Block, who works with Rabbi David Fohrman, notes that the Jews had trouble accepting the manna (a complete food from God that arrived six days a week). They would try to process the manna, by grinding and pounding it, making it into cakes, and cooking it. Block interprets this behavior as the people wanting some control over what they were eating. They were unwilling to feel vulnerable and entirely dependent on God. This unwillingness to accept God's gift of watching over all aspects of their lives scared the generation of the Exodus. They had a paralyzing fear of being vulnerable, and that fear came out in ways that both Moshe and God considered evil. Rabbi Yehoshua Singer (Dvar below) adds the Sforno's insight that the people could have focused on God's love and protection, and recognized their awe and fear of Hashem, rather than looking for ways to complain about trivial matters. God would have accepted and respected complaints for proper rather than improper reasons.

Rabbi Yitzchok Magriso, an 18th Century author from Constantinople, studied the dates in the Torah carefully and discovered that the remaining events involving the generation of the Exodus all took place during a single week. Miriam's tzaraat (chapter 12), the departure of the Meraglim (chapter 13), and Korach's rebellion (chapter 16) all took place between 22 and 29 Sivan in the second year after the Exodus. (See Torah Anthology 13.333-34.) After the Torah reports the law of the Red Heifer (chapter 19), there is a 38 year gap, and the Torah resumes at chapter 20 with the events of the final year. My interpretation is that after the evil events when B'Nai Yisrael left the base of Har Sinai, Moshe and God soon realized that the generation of the Exodus was not qualified to enter the land of Israel. Events in chapters 12-18 reinforced this dawning realization. For the remainder of Sefer Bemidbar, key members of the next generation, such as Pinchas and the daughters of Zelophehad, start taking more prominent roles. Along with Yehoshua, these younger leaders will provide the leadership that B'Nai Yisrael will need to enter, capture, and settle the land of Israel.

The four weeks from now to the beginning of the Three Weeks is a time for many simchas. Mazel-Tov to Amollia Antine, daughter of Rabbi Nissan and Sarah Antine, on her Bat Mitzvah at Beth Sholom this Shabbat, and to Nachi Singer, son of Rabbi Yehoshua and Serena Singer, on his Bar Mitzvah at Am HaTorah Congregation in Bethesda, also this Shabbat. Mazel-Tov to Avraham Rosen, son of Rabbi Yosef and Hedva Rosen, whose Bar Mitzvah in Carmiel, Israel last year was restricted to family only because of the pandemic.

Of course, we Jews always seem to have tzuras along with simcha. Our family and community mourn the passing of Robert Levinson, father of Rebbetzin Sari Raskin, earlier this week. Our condolences also to Rabbi Adam Raskin and grandchildren Mia, Nessa, and Ezra Raskin. We also mourn the loss a week ago of our cousin Alex Shakhman, father of Michael Shakhman (Linda) and ex-husband of Gina Vinnitskaya. Alex brought his family to Gaithersburg from Kiev in 1989, seeking a better life for his family, children, and grandchildren. May the memories of Robert Levinson and Alex Shakhman be for blessings. Not seeing Robert at Har Shalom, and not seeing Alex at family gatherings, will haunt us for a long time.

Behaalotecha always reminds me that my beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, and I shared the Haftorah from Behaalotecha (and first Shabbat of Hanukkah). This parsha would bring me memories even if it did not have the abrupt shift from great joy to great sorrow and disappointment.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah & Alan

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work

during the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Menachem Mendel ben Chana, Eli ben Hanina, Yoram HaKohen ben Shoshana, Gedalya ben Sarah, Mordechai ben Chaya, Baruch Yitzhak ben Perl, David Leib HaKohen ben Sheina Reizel, Zev ben Sara Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, HaRav Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Amoz ben Tziviah, Reuven ben Masha, Moshe David ben Hannah, Meir ben Sara, Yitzhok Tzvi ben Yehudit Miriam, Yaakov Naphtali ben Michal Leah, Ramesh bat Heshmat, Rivka Chaya bat Leah, Zissel Bat Mazal, Chana Bracha bas Rochel Leah, Leah Fruma bat Musa Devorah, Hinda Behla bat Chaya Leah, Nechama bas Tikva Rachel, Miriam Chava bat Yachid, and Ruth bat Sarah, all of whom greatly need our prayers.

Hannah & Alan

Drasha: Behaaloscha: Sweet Memories

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 1998

[Please remember Mordechai ben Chaya for a Mishebarach!]

Sweet memories do not fade fast. And neither do pungent ones. That is why the Jewish nation complained bitterly about their miraculous fare, the manna. The manna was a miraculous treat sent daily from heaven to sustain a nation of more than two million people in a barren desert. It was shaped like coriander seed, shone like crystal, and had a miraculous property. It would assume the flavor of any cuisine that its consumer would think about! If a person wanted steak, it tasted like steak. If ice cream was on the menu of the mind, then ice cream it was. My teachers, though I can't imagine they had Midrashic sources, claimed that it could even taste like Cookie Dough Ice Cream! There was a small catch, however. Though the manna had the miraculous ability to transform into a palette of delicacies, merely on the whim of its consumer, it was not able to transform into every imaginable taste. It could not assume the taste of onions, garlic, and a variety of gourds. The divine ability was of course there, but Hashem's compassion overrode His culinary metamorphosis process. Onions and garlic are not the best foods for nursing mothers. And if a pregnant or nursing mother would think of the pungent flavors of those foods, it would, perhaps, maltreat the child.

And thus the men complained, "we remember the fish that we ate in Egypt – and the gourds and onions and garlic! But now there is nothing, we look forward to nothing but the manna!" (Numbers: 11:5-6).

Though the complaint seems slightly ludicrous, for many years I wondered: Supernatural Divinity was able to transform the dough-like fare into the most sumptuous of meals – all according to the whim and fancy of the individual taster. Why, then, didn't Divinity let the manna discern? Let a garlic taste manifest itself only for the men and women who it would not affect, and not for the women who were with child, whose babies would be harmed by the pungent effluvium?

Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski in Not Just Stories tells the legend of Rabbi Moshe of Kobrin, whose disciple, Reb Yitzchok, was in dire straits. Impoverished, he had hardly any food to feed his children, and in addition he had two daughters to wed. Reb Yitzchak's wife pleaded with him to ask the Rebbe of Kobrin for a blessing, but alas, each time Reb Yitzchak crossed the saintly Rebbe's threshold, he forgot about his own necessities.

Finally, Reb Yitzchak mustered the courage to ask for a blessing of wealth.

Rabbi Moshe promised him the blessing of great wealth, but he made one provision. He gave Reb Yitzchak two gold coins and ordered him to buy the finest food and drink.

"However," added the Rebbe, "your wife and children may not partake in any of this food. Not a morsel. Not under any circumstance. After you use the money," concluded the Rebbe, "return back here."

The next days were mere torture. As his starving wife and children looked on, Reb Yitzchak only nibbled on the food he had bought. He was sick to his stomach. The fine delicacies had no flavor. He could not bear to see the pain of his starving family while he enjoyed the finest food. The pain added a gall-like flavor to the normally delicious food. Reb Yitzchak pleaded with the Almighty to take his soul so that he would not bear the pain.

Reb Yitzchak quickly returned to the Rebbe.

“Yitzchak,” said the Rebbe. “I could have blessed you immediately, but are you ready to enjoy the abundance of wealth, while knowing that other Jews do not have? Your recent experience is a lesson for those who have, while others are deprived. Now, Yitzchak, are you ready for wealth?”

Reb Yitzchak exclaimed, “Never!” and returned home.

Eventually, the blessing rested upon Reb Yitzchak and his wife, but they never forgot the plight of others.

Manna fell with inherent qualities; and it had the potential to explode with a bounty of delicious flavors. But it would not be fair to limit its pleasures only to a portion of the people. If expectant and nursing women could not partake in certain foods, their spouses and the entire nation had to share the restrictions too.

And though there may be no great pain in abstaining from onion and garlic for a while, it is important to find commonality even in life's little inconveniences. Because true sharing is feeling the pain of even the minutest discomforts. It is a lesson that Klal Yisrael had to learn as they trekked together in the desert, striving to become one large unit. They learned to unite by joining together while missing out on some of the spices of life. Because the nation that binds together – binds together!

Good Shabbos!

Is Inclusion a Jewish Value?

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2021

Is inclusion a Jewish value? The answer seems obvious. God enjoins the Israelites, “You shall have one standard for stranger and citizen alike” (Leviticus 24:22). Those who might otherwise be at the margins of society are to be equal members.

My wife, however, hates the word “inclusion.” With two sons on the spectrum, she—and I—are particularly sensitive to what various terms are saying and what they imply. What’s wrong with the word “inclusion,” my wife tells me, is that it implies that certain people are on the outside of our community, and that it is our responsibility to welcome them and bring them in. When I asked her what term might be better, she suggested the word “membership.” Everyone is an equal member of our society, both the stranger—the disabled, the neurodiverse, and all those who are marginalized—and the citizen alike. It is not our responsibility to include; rather, it is our responsibility to recognize everyone’s membership and to never do anything to exclude, to push them out and to tell them, through our actions and inactions, that they are not welcome, that they don’t belong.

This sentiment is underscored in this week’s parsha, BeHa’alotecha. The Torah describes how Moses instructed the Israelites to offer the Paschal sacrifice on the eve of Passover, their first in the wilderness. Those who were ritually impure at the time, and hence not permitted to bring the sacrifice, approached Moses and challenged him: “Why must we be excluded from presenting the LORD’s offering at its set time together with the rest of the Israelites?” (Bamidbar 9:7). Why, they were saying, are we being pushed out of the community? The Paschal sacrifice is the re-living of the foundational story of the Jewish people, and the affirmation of one’s identity as part of this people. By telling us that we cannot bring this sacrifice, you are telling us—whether you intended to or not, whether you are doing it actively or not—that we are not part of “the rest of the Israelites.” We refuse to accept this!

Moses, surprisingly, does not respond: This is what God has commanded; what can I do? Rather, he does the impossible. Moses says, Let me check with God and see if maybe we can figure this out, despite what God has said so far. And, lo

and behold, he is told that even if one structure won't work, there is another structure that will work for them. They can offer the sacrifice on Pesach Sheni, one month later.

There are multiple lessons that we can learn from this exchange. A communal leader must be accessible. A leader's congregants have to feel that they can bring their concerns to her and she will be open and responsive to their needs. We further see that passive exclusion is no less alienating and hurtful than active exclusion. Moses essentially tells the ritually impure Israelites that in theory he would like them to participate, but that there is nothing that he can do. He isn't pushing them away—he just can't find an opportunity for them to participate.

This exchange regularly plays out in our own time. Rabbis say, "I'd love to make a ramp, but we just don't have the money. I'd love to create a special group for neurodiverse kids, but we don't have the expertise and we don't know what they need." Or the rabbi isn't even approached with these issues because he has made it clear that he is not going to be open to hear the critique, and he will not be responsive if and when he does hear it. And then, of course, there are too often situations of active exclusion. There are comments such as, "We can't have your child in our school. Think of the impact on the other students and the parents."

Whenever any of this happens, we are not failing in inclusion. We are actively engaging in exclusion. We push people out, knowing or otherwise. We tell them you are not part of "the rest of the Israelites." And too often, they hear that message loud and clear, and they walk away as well—not just from the school or shul, but from Yiddishkeit.

If we start by recognizing everyone's membership, then we will do everything we can to make sure that all our members are treated equitably and given whatever accommodations they need. No one should ever have to say, "Why am I being excluded?!"

Shabbat Shalom.

<https://library.yct Torah.org/2021/05/is-inclusion-a-jewish-value/>

Are You for Real?

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine* © 2021 Teach 613

Our teacher Moshe was unique. Known to us as "the father of prophets," he is the only prophet to have communicated so directly with Hashem. The Torah describes it, "Like a man speaks with his friend," so was the communication of Hashem with Moshe.

At the conclusion of the Revelation at Sinai, Hashem told Moshe that the people should return to "their tents," to normal family relations. "But you, Moshe," Hashem continued, "shall remain with Me." Thus, Moshe was specifically commanded to be always ready for revelation with Hashem and was not permitted to return to normal relations with his wife.

This decision for Moshe to separate from intimacy with his wife was Hashem's decision. Moshe was to be elevated to the level of a human who is always on call for the highest levels of communication with Hashem. This unusual command of a holy man separating from his wife existed only in the case of Moshe. And it was this command of separation that Miriam, Moshe's sister, was not aware of.

When Miriam heard that Moshe had separated from his wife, she spoke of his behavior with criticism to their brother Aharon. "Did Hashem not speak to other prophets as well?" she asked. Miriam implied that -- in her judgment -- Moshe should not conduct himself with greater righteousness than other prophets.

Miriam was punished with Tzaraas for speaking Lashon Horah. Indeed, she should have judged her righteous brother favorably and realized that he was acting under Divine directive. The way Hashem apprises her of her mistake is most fascinating.

The verse tells us that Hashem called "suddenly" to Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam. The Medrash explains: For Moshe, Hashem's sudden call was not surprising. He was always ready for high level Divine revelation. But Aharon and Miriam were taken by surprise. They ran to immerse themselves in a mikvah to ready themselves for the revelation.

By coming to them “suddenly” Hashem made it clear, through their own experience, that Moshe was indeed different. It is as if Hashem said, “This is the type of relationship I have with Moshe. He is always on the ready for Me. Now you can understand why he, and he alone from among all the prophets, was commanded such an unusual command.”

Moshe’s behavior would have been considered haughty and self-righteous had he not been on such a unique level. Once it was clear that Moshe is indeed on the unusual level, and this observance was appropriate with his level, there was nothing objectionable about his behavior.

I am reminded of a story that occurred in Chicago about sixty years ago. The vice president of a large company called a Jewish accounting firm asking for an appointment. The goal of the appointment clearly was to consider hiring them for their accounting needs. All went well with the phone call until they started discussing possible dates for the meeting. The vice president suggested a certain Thursday in October, and the accountant replied that the office would be closed that day for a Jewish holiday. The vice president took it in stride and suggested that they meet Friday. The accountant replied that Friday was a Jewish holiday as well and they would be closed.

The vice president was a bit surprised but pressed on trying to make the relationship work. He said, “Well, we will be in town through Saturday night. If you prefer, we can meet on Saturday.” The accountant replied that a Saturday meeting would also not work.

Exasperated, the vice president declared that if they were snubbed for three days in a row, they would find a different accounting firm.

The Yom Tov of Succos passed pleasantly for this accountant, and it was followed by a delightful Shabbos. When the accountant showed up to work on Monday morning, he was greeted pleasantly by the vice president and two other company representatives. They asked simply is now a good time to talk business. The accountant must have registered surprise on his face, as if to say, “You promised me that if I didn’t break my holiday, you wouldn’t give me the job,” so they explained.

“We came on Thursday when we got to town, and we saw that you were closed. We came back Friday and saw that you were indeed closed. So, we asked the guard about you and he said, “Sure, they are always closed on Jewish holidays.”

“We asked him about Saturday. He said, “Oh, no, Saturday is different... Thursday and Friday are Jewish holidays. Those only come a few times a year. But Saturday -- No -- they never come in on Saturday.”

“We discussed this among ourselves,” the vice president said, nodding to his colleagues, “and we decided that you are the real thing. With personal integrity like yours... we would like you to take care of our financials.”

Sometimes when we interact with others in a way that involves religious standards, we find that they, or we, will place greater priority on one area or another. This is to be expected. No one is expected to be a clone of the other.

What is important is that the priorities expressed should be real. When they are real, they should be respected.

The lesson of Miriam’s Lashon Horah is that Moshe’s behavior seemed haughty and out of place. But then we found out that his behavior was a true expression of self. He was to be respected for it because he did it as a result of a Higher Calling.

With heartfelt blessings for a wonderful Shabbos!

* Rav of Southeast Hebrew Congregation, White Oak (Silver Spring), MD and Director of Teach 613.

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Intellectual Humility: Thoughts for Parashat Beha'aloteha

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

Some years ago, a seventh grade student in a yeshiva day school asked me a serious question. His Rebbi was teaching the class about the sin of embarrassing another person. The Rebbi stated that if A embarrasses B, then Hashem transfers all the mitzvot of A to B, and all the sins of B to A. The student was puzzled by the severity of this punishment, and he asked me: "Is this really true?"

While not wanting to undermine the authority of the Rebbi, I also did not want this student to think that the Rebbi's words were literally true. Indeed, the Rebbi's statement is problematic in various ways. 1. Does anyone (except for a prophet) have first-hand knowledge as to how God decides on rewards and punishments? Isn't it pretentious in the extreme to attribute policies to God, when in fact there is no way to verify such claims? 2. Is it proper religious education to present God in such a way as to make Him appear egregiously unjust? How is it fair to deprive a person of all his/her mitzvot and to transfer them to one he/she has embarrassed? How is it fair for God to transfer all the sins of the victim to the one who embarrassed him/her? 3. Does the Rebbi imagine that his simplistic lesson will be accepted blindly and unthinkingly by his students? Does he really think they will now be less likely to embarrass one another because they fear such dire consequences from God?

I told the seventh grader that the Rebbi was drawing on a classic Midrashic style of rhetoric. The lesson is not to be taken as literally true, but is a figurative way of saying: embarrassing another person is a very bad thing to do. Similarly, Hazal taught that embarrassing someone is akin to murder. They did not mean that one was literally guilty of murder and subject to a death penalty; they used hyperbole to express the seriousness of the transgression.

When teaching the words of our Sages, we need to have the literary tact to know how they used language. If we teach hyperbolic statements as being literally true, then we not only misconstrue the teachings of our Sages, but we unwittingly mislead our students into believing problematic things. As they grow older and wiser, they may say to themselves: if our Rebbis were mistaken on this, perhaps they were mistaken on many other matters.

In this week's Torah portion, we read: "And the man Moses was very humble, more than any other person on the face of the earth" (Bemidbar 12:3). When we read the accounts of Moses in the Torah, we do indeed see instances where he displayed humility. But we also see many examples of strong public action: he confronted Pharaoh fearlessly; he led the Israelites with fortitude. Although he described himself as having a "heavy tongue" and lacking eloquence, Moses spoke to the Israelites with strength and great oratorical skill. In what sense was Moses "very humble?"

We generally identify humility with meekness, shyness, quietude. Yet, perhaps the Torah is indicating another perspective on true humility. Moses was the most humble person specifically because he was the person who came closest to God, who spoke to God "face to face." Because he confronted God on such a high level, Moses was the human being who best understood the ultimate limitations of humanity. While others were living on the mundane level—filled with competitiveness and jealousy and interpersonal strife—Moses lived on an entirely different plane. He achieved exceeding humility by being as close as possible to the eternal and infinite God. His grand vision transcended petty human jealousies and strife. The closer one is to God, the loftier one's religious vision becomes. The loftier one's religious vision, the more humble one becomes.

This humility does not necessarily manifest itself in meekness and shyness. Rather, it manifests itself in a spiritual wisdom and serenity that rises above the human fray, and in an overwhelming desire to live life in context with eternal God. It necessarily leads to an honest evaluation of what we know, and what we do not know, and what we cannot know.

I believe that this lesson very much applies to the way we live and teach Torah. While none of us will reach the level of Moses, all of us can aspire to a true humility that entails intellectual honesty, compassion, and a genuine knowledge of our limitations. Since we are not prophets, we should not speak as though we are prophets; we should not speak with certainty of supernatural things beyond our ken; we should not make claims about how God does or doesn't mete out punishments. When we read rabbinic teachings that go beyond these basic guidelines, then we should understand them in their literary, rhetorical spirit.

As we learn in Pirkei Avot: "Sages, be very careful with your words." Just as proper words can bring people closer to Torah, improper words can ultimately alienate people from Torah.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, <https://www.jewishideas.org/intellectual-humility-thoughts-parashat-beha%E2%80%99aloteha> **The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has experienced a significant drop in donations during the pandemic. The Institute needs our help to maintain and strengthen our Institute. Each gift, large or small, is a vote for an intellectually vibrant, compassionate, inclusive Orthodox Judaism. You may contribute on our website [jewishideas.org](https://www.jewishideas.org) or you may send your check to Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2 West 70th Street, New York, NY 10023. Ed.: Please join me in helping the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals at this time.**

Surprised by Anti-Semitism? Yes and No.

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

Although Jews have faced anti-Semitism from time immemorial, it always comes upon us as something new. It surprises us. We don't understand it.

We strive to be good people, good citizens; we are kind hearted and generous. We devote ourselves to the education of our children, to the betterment of society, to justice and compassion. We have our share of faults along with all other human beings; but by and large, we are a good, responsible, hard-working community.

And yet, no matter what we do, people hate us! They don't see us as individual human beings but as a vast stereotype. They don't care if we are religious or not religious; if we are liberals or conservatives. If we are Jewish, they are against us and want to hurt us.

It was once thought that the establishment of the State of Israel would bring anti-Semitism to an end. After all, Jews would then have a feeling of security in the world, a safe haven where no one would bother us.

But the Jewish State has simply become a new target for the anti-Semites. They now couch Jew-hatred for hatred of "the Zionists." Anti-Semites don't have a problem with Hamas firing thousands of missiles at civilian centers in Israel; but when Israel responds by bombing the enemy, Israel is immediately condemned and vilified by the haters. For the anti-Semites, Israel is always wrong regardless of what it does or doesn't do.

Happily, there are many millions of people who feel warmly toward Jews and the Jewish State. Happily, many millions of people admire the accomplishments of the State of Israel in the face of so many obstacles; they respect Israel's right—and obligation—to defend its citizens.

But when we see outbreaks of blatant anti-Jewish violence, anti-Jewish rhetoric, anti-Israel demonization—it surprises and pains us! In spite of thousands of years dealing with anti-Jewish hatred and persecution, we still are not used to it. We somehow think that humanity will improve, will judge us fairly. We grow optimistic at any sign of peace and understanding, mutual cooperation and solidarity.

We keep telling ourselves that most people are good and that reason will ultimately prevail. The haters will eventually overcome malice and violence; they will realize the value of peaceful and respectful cooperation. In a world of over seven billion human beings, surely there must be room for the infinitesimal presence of 15 million Jews. In a world with so many countries, surely there must be room for one tiny Jewish State that wants nothing more than to be able to live in peace and security.

But the anti-Semites and anti-Zionists don't really care. They don't want to be reasoned with; they don't want to listen. They have their agenda of hate.

Saul Bellow, the American novelist who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1976, wrote in his book *To Jerusalem and Back: A Personal Account*: "...There is one fact of Jewish life unchanged by the creation of a Jewish state: you cannot take your right to live for granted. Others can; you cannot. This is not to say that everyone else is living pleasantly and well under a decent regime. No, it means only that the Jews, because they are Jews, have never been able to take the right to live as a natural right....This right is still clearly not granted them, not even in the liberal West."

Bellow's complaint is not new. Jews throughout the generations have had to face the same stark reality: Jews, because they are Jews, cannot take the right to live as a natural right.

That's the sad part of the story.

But that's not the end of the story. Even if there has long been hatred and violence directed against Jews...we are still here! We continue to live, to thrive, to hope.

The late Jewish thinker, Simon Rawidowicz, wrote an essay about "Israel: the Ever-Dying People." He noted that Jews have often felt that theirs was the last Jewish generation. Jewish survival seemed hopeless. But although we were "ever-dying," we were in fact ever-living! We often felt despair; but hope and persistence prevailed. Jews found ways to overcome all who would decimate us.

Although current manifestations of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism are ugly and painful, we must take the long view of things. This isn't the first period of Jewish history where Jews faced viciousness and violence. It likely won't be the last period either. But long experience has taught us to stay strong, stay confident, stay positive. The challenge to our generation is to stand tall as Jews, to stand strong on behalf of Israel.

And we do look forward to a time when humanity will overcome the disease of anti-Semitism. Meanwhile, we recall the words of Rav Nahman of Bratslav: All the world is a narrow bridge; the essential thing is not to be afraid, not to be afraid at all.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, <https://www.jewishideas.org/article/surprised-anti-semitism-yes-and-no>

Jewish Americans Deserve Hate Crime Protection

By Dov S. Zakheim *

On Thursday, May 20, President Joe Biden signed the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, which had been passed overwhelmingly by both houses of Congress. The act was a forceful response to the disgraceful attacks on Asian-Americans by bigots who blamed them for the Covid-19 pandemic, which had originated in China. In passing the act, members of both parties in the House and Senate demonstrated that they can do the right thing, at least once in a while.

Nothing of the sort appears to be contemplated in response to the attacks by Palestinian sympathizers on Jewish-American persons, synagogues, and restaurants during and after the latest Israel-Hamas conflict. In Los Angeles, pro-Palestinian attackers threw punches and bottles at diners at a kosher sushi restaurant. In New York's heavily Jewish Diamond District, Palestinian supporters threw fireworks at Jews from a car amid a violent street altercation. Hamas supporters also beat a Jewish man in New York's Times Square sending him to hospital with severe injuries. They threatened Jewish residents in a heavily Jewish Miami neighborhood. Video surveillance at Chicago's Persian Hebrew Congregation, which was defaced by attackers, captured two people, one carrying a stick and another holding a sign that read "Freedom for Palestine."

In each of these cases, and others elsewhere in the United States, the pro-Palestinian attackers had no idea whether their Jewish targets were supporters of Israel. Indeed, polls have shown that a majority of Jewish Americans support the creation of a Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel. No matter. Those who support the Palestinian cause attacked their victims merely because they were Jews. In so doing, they confirmed that their hatred of Israel extends to all Jews everywhere, as indeed, Hamas has made clear in its own charter.

All told, the Anti-Defamation League has reported at least 200 possible anti-Semitic incidents in the United States since the onset of the fighting between Israel and Hamas. Nevertheless, despite the ongoing upsurge in attacks on Jews, especially against so-called visible Jews—that is bearded Jews who dress in black suits, or merely Jews who will sport a small yarmulke or wear a star of David necklace—the leadership of the Democratic-controlled Congress has done little more than issue sympathetic tweets. As a body, Congress has done virtually nothing to condemn the attacks, much less legislate against them.

One reason for Congressional inaction is that the pro-Palestinian attackers have the support of the so-called progressive Democratic Left. Democrats in the House have a five-seat majority, while the ultra-Left "squad," which is blatantly anti-

Israel and pro-Palestinian, now boasts six members. While Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez at least has tweeted her condemnation of anti-Jewish attacks, several of her squad colleagues have not even gone that far. Not surprisingly, therefore, Speaker Nancy Pelosi cannot afford to alienate these progressives by pressing for legislation that would bring into sharper focus attacks on Jews by Palestinian sympathizers.

Another reason for Congressional inaction is that Democrats are reluctant to criticize some of their own progressive legislators, even when the likes of Congresswoman Ilhan Omar issue blatantly anti-Semitic tweets. Indeed, in the aftermath of one such tweet, the House actually did consider a draft measure to condemn anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, under pressure from progressives, the Democratic House leadership watered the measure down so that in its final form it included not only anti-Semitism but also Islamophobia and discrimination against Latinos, Asian Americans, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, immigrants, and the LGBTQ community. That the resolution had been rendered entirely meaningless is evidenced by the fact that despite its having included Asian Americans, Congress recognized the need for separate—and meaningful—legislation that solely was geared to anti-Asian bigotry and hate crimes.

Democrats are fond of pointing out the cowardice of those of their Republican colleagues, who slavishly support Donald Trump and all that he stands for. They are right to do so. On the other hand, it is high time that Democrats showed some courage of their own. They should put an end to their own cowardly appeasement of an increasingly belligerent Left, and finally pass legislation, similar to that for Asian Americans, that would severely punish those who would verbally and physically abuse their fellow Americans simply because they happen to be Jewish.

* Undersecretary of defense (comptroller) and chief financial officer for the U.S. Department of Defense from 2001–200. Also, deputy undersecretary of defense (planning and resources) from 1985–1987.

<https://www.jewishideas.org/article/jewish-americans-deserve-hate-crime-protection>

B'ha'aloscha – It's The Thought That Counts

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer *

As the Jewish people began traveling towards Israel, they complained about the manna and asked for meat. Hashem tells Moshe that the people are going to be punished by receiving more meat than they can handle. Moshe responds and seems to ask Hashem how it is possible to get so much meat for such a large nation. Moshe expresses his astonishment saying, "If flock and cattle would be slaughtered for them, would it be found for them? If all the fish of the sea would be gathered for them, would it be found for them?" Hashem responds sharply to Moshe saying, "Would the Hand of G-d fall short? Now you will see if My word will happen to you or not." (Bamidbar 11:22-23)

The Sforno explains that Moshe's question was a philosophical one. He understood that the reason the people were complaining was because they wanted to challenge Hashem and that their request for meat was just an excuse. As it says in Tehillim, "They tested G-d in their hearts by requesting food for their craving." (Tehillim 78:18) Moshe was therefore asking that no matter how much food they were given, they would still find another excuse. Even if their desire for meat would be met, they would simply find another food to ask for. Moshe thought that the only way they would stop complaining after they received the meat would be for G-d to remove their free will and prevent them from finding another reason to complain. Moshe knew that G-d would not remove free will, and therefore asked that no matter what they were given it wouldn't be enough for them.

The Sforno continues and tells us that G-d's response to Moshe, "Would the Hand of G-d fall short?" was addressing this philosophical issue. G-d was telling Moshe that there are indeed means and ways for a person to be disgusted with all foods and not only with the meat. Furthermore, this could be done without impacting their free will at all. Even once they no longer had any desires, they would be able to exercise their free will and stop complaining out of love and awe for G-d, if they want to.

This expression of free will seems insignificant. How can the Sforno say that removing their desire would not impact their free will at all? If their desire was gone they would have nothing to complain about. How could they truly choose not to complain if they wouldn't be complaining anymore anyway?

If we study the words of the Sforno, he doesn't say that they could choose to stop complaining. Rather he says they could choose to stop complaining out of love and awe of G-d. Whether or not they were complaining wasn't ultimately the issue that G-d was interested in. What G-d cared about was their attitude towards complaining. Would they feel that complaining was okay if there is reason to, or would they recognize that awe and love of G-d alone are reasons that they should never have complained? They wouldn't be able to choose whether or not to complain, but they could still choose whether or not to love and revere G-d.

The Sforno is learning that G-d was telling Moshe that so long as the decision to revere and love G-d remains, free will has not been diminished at all. The true expression of free will is not in what we do or don't do in life. Rather, the true expression of free will is how we choose to approach life. Do we wish to live life with G-d in mind, or do we wish to live life for our own purposes irrelevant of G-d's will? Even if the decision is irrelevant, G-d values the decision itself to love and revere Him.

G-d gave us the great gifts of Torah and mitzvos as tools with which we can express our decision to care about Him. By living a Torah life we train ourselves to be aware of G-d and to choose to serve Him. However, it is not the service alone which is significant. Rather, it is the intent behind the service which is where the real value lies. What G-d truly wants from us is that we should invest in our relationship with Him, just as He has invested in us. It is this love and awe which is the essence of man's free will.

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Behaalotecha: Anti-Semitism by Rabbi Moshe Rube*

Some things are so obvious and have been repeated so often that it becomes nauseating to talk about. With Anti-Semitic attacks on the rise, I feel a collective sigh of exasperation. Here we go again. Why should we have to keep repeating this? Can't we all just move on? The world is so vast and beautiful for us to explore but instead we get dragged back into discussing things that should have been settled many moons ago.

But it makes me feel better that Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato (1707-1746), Italian rabbi and Kabbalist, started one of his most famous books on spirituality with "I'm not here to teach you anything new, but rather to remind you of what you already know." Stating the obvious has been happening for a while. So let's do just that.

- 1) The specific hatred of Jews has been a millennia long plague that has caused tremendous suffering, death, and pain, both physically and mentally to the Jewish People.
- 2) Anti-Zionism is a thin veil for Anti-Semitism. Simply saying "Let's attack Jews because we hate Jews" doesn't work as well anymore, but saying "Let's attack Jews because we don't like that they're in Israel" gets a little more leeway. The results and motivations are the same. If you want to have a nuanced conversation about history and Israeli policy, then let us first agree that Israel has a right to exist and that Jews have a right to live safe and free under their own governance in Israel. If you can't agree to that, then no conversation can take place.
- 3) Israel is not perfect and must behave morally with all its citizens, Jews and non Jews. But with people who deny their right to even exist, Israel has the sacred mitzvah to defend itself and assure that these people will never harm a hair on the head of any of those who live within its borders. (Yes. It is a mitzvah to guard your life. How much more so for an entire Jewish state.)
- 4) Hamas's charter denies Israel's right to exist and preaches war against the Jews, while Israel's contains no such similar statement about Hamas or about any Arab nation. Who's the aggressor?
- 5) Any attack on one Jewish person for their Jewishness is an attack on every Jew. You and me. We just happen to be in a different geographic location.

So what do we do? Social media can be useful if that's your thing. Here are 3 other suggestions based on Yaakov our father's preparations when he had to meet Eisav.

1) Defend yourself. You can work on getting physically stronger so you can increase your confidence in your ability to stand up for yourself. Or you can read more about Israel's history. Then if you need to defend yourself with words (which I hope would be the case rather than physically), you can do so more effectively.

2) Sanctify God's name by always being nice to everyone both to our Jewish and non Jewish friends and neighbors. Thank God we have a lot of friends here and abroad, and I have heard support from many of them. Let us make sure we recognize that all humans are made in God's image, and our greatest wish is to live in peace and friendship with all our neighbors.

3) Pray. Nachmanides finds the source for the mitzvah of prayer from our Torah portion this week. Numbers 10:9 states that when an enemy comes against us, we must cry out to God and He will save us.

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Rav Kook Torah **Beha'alotecha: The Unique Prophecy of Moses**

Separating from Tziporah

"Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses regarding the dark-skinned woman he had married." (Num. 12:1)

What was Miriam and Aaron's complaint? The Sages explained that they were upset that Moses had separated from Tziporah, Jethro's dark-skinned daughter. Miriam and Aaron were able to receive prophecy without resorting to celibacy. Why did Moses feel he needed to separate from his wife?

The separation was in fact Moses' idea; God had not commanded him to do this. The Talmud explains that Moses decided it was necessary after he witnessed the Divine revelation at Mount Sinai. Moses reasoned:

"The Shechinah spoke with all of Israel only on one occasion, and at a predetermined hour. Nevertheless, the Torah cautioned [the Israelites at Sinai], "Do not go near a woman" Certainly I, with whom the Shechinah speaks at all times and with no set hour, must do the same." (Shabbat 87a)

The Sages noted that Moses' reasoning was sound and that God approved of his decision. Their proof: after the revelation at Sinai, God told the people, "Return to your tents" [i.e., return to your families]. But to Moses, He said: "You, however, shall stay here with Me" (Deut. 5:27-28).

Why was this separation something that Moses needed to work out for himself? And why was Moses the only prophet who needed to separate from his wife?

Divine Perspective

Despite the innate greatness of the human soul, we are limited by our personal issues and concerns. Compared to the Shechinah's all-encompassing light — a brilliant light that illuminates all worlds and everything they contain — our private lives are like a candle's feeble light in the blazing sunlight of the sun. The cosmos are brimming with holiness, in all of their minutiae, in their transformations and advances, in their physical and spiritual paths. All of their heights and depths are holy; all is God's treasure.

In order to acquire this higher perspective, a prophet must free himself from his own narrow viewpoint. The pristine dawn of lofty da'at (knowledge) must be guarded from those influences that induce the prophet to withdraw to the private circle of his own family.

Moses, the faithful shepherd, could not be confined to the limited framework of private life, not even momentarily. His entire world was God's universe, where everything is holy.

It was Moses who recognized the need to separate himself from matters pertaining to his private life. From the Divine

perspective, all is holy, and such measures are unnecessary. For Moses, however, it was essential. It allowed him to raise his sights and acquire a more elevated outlook. Separating from his family allowed Moses' soul to constantly commune with the Soul of all worlds. It enabled Moses to attain his uniquely pure prophetic vision.

Continual Light of Moses' Vision

What was so special about Moses' prophecy that, unlike all other prophets, he needed to detach himself from private life? We may use the analogy of lightning to illustrate the qualitative difference between the prophecy of Moses and that of other prophets.

Imagine walking in a pitch-black world where the only source of light is the light emitted by an occasional bolt of lightning. It would be impossible to truly identify one's surroundings in such a dark setting. Even if the lightning occurs repeatedly, the lack of constant illumination makes this form of light inadequate. If, however, the lightning is extremely frequent, like a strobe light set to flash at a fast frequency, its illumination is transformed into a source of constant light.

This analogy may be applied to spiritual enlightenment. One cannot truly recognize the elevated realm, its holiness and eternal morality, the rule of justice and the influence of the sublime, without the illumination of continual prophecy.

Ordinary prophecy is like the intermittent light of an occasional lightning bolt. Only the Torah, the unique prophecy of Moses, is a light that radiates continually. We are able to perceive the truth of the world's inner essence through this constant light, and live our lives accordingly.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV, p. 174; Orot HaKodesh vol. I, p. 275.)

http://www.ravkooktorah.org/BEHAALOTECHA_65.htm

From Despair to Hope (Beha'alotecha 5776)

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.*

There have been times when one passage in today's parsha was for me little less than life-saving. No leadership position is easy. Leading Jews is harder still. And spiritual leadership can be hardest of them all. Leaders have a public face that is usually calm, upbeat, optimistic and relaxed. But behind the façade we can all experience storms of emotion as we realise how deep are the divisions between people, how intractable are the problems we face, and how thin the ice on which we stand. Perhaps we all experience such moments at some point in our lives, when we know where we are and where we want to be, but simply cannot see a route from here to there. That is the prelude to despair.

Whenever I felt that way I would turn to the searing moment in our parsha when Moses reached his lowest ebb. The precipitating cause was seemingly slight. The people were engaged in their favourite activity: complaining about the food. With self-deceptive nostalgia, they spoke about the fish they ate in Egypt, and the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. Gone is their memory of slavery. All they can recall is the cuisine. At this, understandably, God was very angry (Num. 11:10). But Moses was more than angry. He suffered a complete emotional breakdown. He said this to God:

"Why have You brought this evil on your servant? Why have I failed to find favour in Your eyes, that You have placed the burden of this whole people on me? Did I conceive this whole people? Did I give birth to it, that You should say to me, Carry it in your lap as a nurse carries a baby? ... Where can I find meat to give to this whole people when they cry to me saying, Give us meat to eat? I cannot carry this whole people on my own. It is too heavy for me. If this is what You are doing to me, then, if I have found favour in Your eyes, kill me now, and let me not look upon this my evil." (Num. 11:11-15)

This for me is the benchmark of despair. Whenever I felt unable to carry on, I would read this passage and think, "If I haven't yet reached this point, I'm OK." Somehow the knowledge that the greatest Jewish leader of all time had experienced this depth of darkness was empowering. It said that the feeling of failure does not necessarily mean that you have failed. All it means is that you have not yet succeeded. Still less does it mean that you are a failure. To the contrary, failure comes to those who take risks; and the willingness to take risks is absolutely necessary if you seek, in however

small a way, to change the world for the better.

What is striking about Tanach is the way it documents these dark nights of the soul in the lives of some of the greatest heroes of the spirit. Moses was not the only prophet to pray to die. Three others did so: Elijah (1 Kings 19:4), Jeremiah (Jer. 20:7-18) and Jonah (Jon. 4:3).[1] The Psalms, especially those attributed to King David, are shot through with moments of despair: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:2). "From the depths I cry to You" (Ps. 130:1). "I am a helpless man abandoned among the dead ... You have laid me in the lowest pit, in the dark, in the depths" (Ps. 88:5-7).

What Tanach telling us in these stories is profoundly liberating. Judaism is not a recipe for blandness or bliss. It is not a guarantee that you will be spared heartache and pain. It is not what the Stoics sought, *apatheia*, a life undisturbed by passion. Nor is it a path to nirvana, stilling the fires of feeling by extinguishing the self. These things have a spiritual beauty of their own, and their counterparts can be found in the more mystical strands of Judaism. But they are not the world of the heroes and heroines of Tanach.

Why so? Because Judaism is a faith for those who seek to change the world. That is unusual in the history of faith. Most religions are about accepting the world the way it is. Judaism is a protest against the world that is in the name of the world that ought to be. To be a Jew is to seek to make a difference, to change lives for the better, to heal some of the scars of our fractured world. But people don't like change. That's why Moses, David, Elijah and Jeremiah found life so hard.

We can say precisely what brought Moses to despair. He had faced a similar challenge before. Back in the book of Exodus the people had made the same complaint: "If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this desert to starve this whole assembly to death" (Ex. 16:3). Moses, on that occasion, experienced no crisis. The people were hungry and needed food. That was a legitimate request.

Since then, though, they had experienced the twin peaks of the revelation at Mount Sinai and the construction of the Tabernacle. They had come closer to God than any nation had ever done before. Nor were they starving. Their complaint was not that they had no food. They had the manna. Their complaint was that it was boring: "Now we have lost our appetite (literally, "our soul is dried up"); we never see anything but this manna!" (Ex. 11:6). They had reached the spiritual heights but they remained the same recalcitrant, ungrateful, small-minded people they had been before.[2]

That was what made Moses feel that his entire mission had failed and would continue to fail. His mission was to help the Israelites create a society that would be the opposite of Egypt, that would liberate instead of oppress, dignify, not enslave. But the people had not changed. Worse: they had taken refuge in the most absurd nostalgia for the Egypt they had left: memories of fish, cucumbers, garlic and the rest. Moses had discovered it was easier to take the Israelites out of Egypt than to take Egypt out of the Israelites. If the people had not changed by now, it was a reasonable assumption that they never would. Moses was staring at his own defeat. There was no point in carrying on.

God then comforted him. First He told him to gather seventy elders to share with him the burdens of leadership, then He told him not to worry about the food. The people would soon have meat in plenty. It came in the form of a huge avalanche of quails.

What is most striking about this story is that thereafter Moses appears to be a changed man. Told by Joshua that there might be a challenge to his leadership, he replies: "Are you jealous on my behalf? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his spirit on them" (Num. 11:29). In the next chapter, when his own brother and sister begin to criticise him, he reacts with total calm. When God punishes Miriam, Moses prays on her behalf. It is specifically at this point in the long biblical account of Moses' life that the Torah says, "The man Moses was very humble, more so than any other man on earth" (Num. 12:3).

The Torah is giving us a remarkable account of the psychodynamics of emotional crisis. The first thing it is telling us is that it is important, in the midst of despair, not to be alone. God performs the role of comforter. It is He who lifts Moses from the pit of despair. He speaks directly to Moses' concerns. He tells him he will not have to lead alone in the future. There will be others to help him. Then He tells him not to be anxious about the people's complaint. They would soon have so much meat that it would make them ill, and they would not complain about the food again.

The essential principle here is what the sages meant when they said, "A prisoner cannot release himself from prison." It

needs someone else to lift you from depression. That is why Judaism is so insistent on not leaving people alone at times of maximum vulnerability. Hence the principles of visiting the sick, comforting mourners, including the lonely (“the stranger, the orphan and the widow”) in festive celebrations, and offering hospitality – an act said to be “greater than receiving the Shechinah.” Precisely because depression isolates you from others, remaining alone intensifies the despair. What the seventy elders actually did to help Moses is unclear. But simply being there with him was part of the cure.

The other thing it is telling us is that surviving despair is a character-transforming experience. It is when your self-esteem is ground to dust that you suddenly realise that life is not about you. It is about others, and ideals, and a sense of mission or vocation. What matters is the cause, not the person. That is what true humility is about. As C. S. Lewis wisely said: humility is not about thinking less of yourself. It is about thinking of yourself less.

When you have arrived at this point, even if you have done so through the most bruising experiences, you become stronger than you ever believed possible. You have learned not to put your self-image on the line. You have learned not to think in terms of self-image at all. That is what Rabbi Yochanan meant when he said, “Greatness is humility.” Greatness is a life turned outward, so that other people’s suffering matters to you more than your own. The mark of greatness is the combination of strength and gentleness that is among the most healing forces in human life.

Moses believed he was a failure. That is worth remembering every time we think we are failures. His journey from despair to self-effacing strength is one of the great psychological narratives in the Torah, a timeless tutorial in hope.

Footnotes:

[1] So of course did Job, but Job was not a prophet, nor according to many commentators was he even Jewish. The book of Job is about another subject altogether, namely, Why do bad things happen to good people? That is a question about God, not about humanity.

[2] Note that the text attributes the complaint to the asafsuf, the rabble, the riffraff, which some commentators take to mean the “mixed multitude” who joined the Israelites on the exodus.

* Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar. See <https://rabbisacks.org/test-character-behaalotecha-5776/>

Who Honored Miriam, and How? No Good Deed Goes Unnoticed

By Yossi Ives * © Chabad 2021

The Torah tells us that “Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses,”¹ for which they received a severe reprimand. As the instigator,² Miriam was struck with a skin condition called tzara’at,³ which required that she be barred from entering the Israelite encampment for a full week.

Thus, the Torah reads: “So Miriam was confined outside of the encampment for seven days, and the people did not travel until Miriam rejoined. Thereafter, the people departed...”⁴ Now, since the verse explicitly states that “the people departed” only after Miriam’s confinement, why was it necessary to also state that “the people did not travel until Miriam rejoined”? It is saying the same thing twice!

Rashi explains that the Torah uses the repetition to highlight the reason for this special consideration towards Miriam: “This honor was accorded her by G d because of the time she remained with [her brother] Moses when he was cast into the river, as the Torah says,⁵ ‘His sister stood by from afar to know what would be done to him.’ ”

This courtesy afforded to her by waiting to journey until she was restored to society was in recognition of the kindness that she had shown waiting for baby Moses when he was placed in the Nile.

Who Decided to Wait?

There is a discrepancy here. The Torah specifies that it was “the people” who did not abandon Miriam, whereas Rashi

suggests that it was an honor accorded to her by G d. This is particularly confusing, as the very words on which Rashi comments are “the people did not travel.” Who, then, was paying respect to Miriam?

Moreover, Rashi’s comment is based on a Mishnah⁶ which states, “Therefore the Israelites waited for her,” suggesting this was a gesture from the people. Why would Rashi deviate from the simple meaning of the Biblical text?

There is a much bigger problem with Rashi’s commentary. Whether it should be attributed to G d or the people, how can waiting for Miriam be described as an act of honor or respect? Abandoning her in the desert wasteland would have put her in imminent danger! There is no way to imagine that the people would have left anyone behind in a place the Torah describes as “that great and awesome desert, [in which there were] snakes, vipers and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water.”⁷ How can Rashi say, “This honor was accorded her” by staying in place during the week of her seclusion, when moving on and leaving her to her own devices would have endangered her life?

Minus this special honor, would the camp have moved on without her? Surely, that is inconceivable.

“Honor” seems entirely the wrong term. They had no choice but to wait for her.

Starting and Stopping

To solve these problems, the Rebbe shows us that the questions stem from a fundamentally incorrect assumption. When we read that the people did not depart until Miriam rejoined the camp, this is not meant to imply that there was any question of Miriam being left behind. Whatever the circumstances, neither Miriam nor anyone else would have been abandoned in the harsh and dangerous desert.

Had the people begun to journey during Miriam’s seven days of seclusion, she would have had to halt her seclusion and move together with everyone else.

By waiting the full seven days until “the days of her confinement were completed,” Miriam did not have to suspend her seclusion period until the Israelites settled elsewhere.

Should they have decamped in the middle of her seven days, once they had camped anew, she would have to resume her seclusion. This would have prolonged the process of her cleansing, which would have been dishonoring.

So the special honor shown to Miriam was that she could get her period of disgrace over and done with as quickly as possible.

How do we know that travel days could not count toward her seven days of seclusion? The Torah states that Miriam’s seclusion was to be for “seven days outside the camp.”⁸ Indeed, the Torah mandates that anyone diagnosed with the tzara’at skin condition “shall dwell isolated; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.”⁹ Being “outside the camp” presupposes the existence of a camp. One can only be outside of a camp, if a camp exists.

When the Israelites decamped and set off on their journey, there was no camp for Miriam to dwell outside of. Thus, her seven-day time period would have had to be put on hold until the camp was restored. Only her honor was at stake, not her safety.

Who Chooses When to Travel?

During their 40 years of wandering in the desert, the Israelites followed the clouds of glory. When the clouds lifted, they would break camp and follow the clouds. When the clouds would descend, they would settle as well. Thus, the fact that they did not travel for seven days was determined by G d, who chose not to lift the clouds.

So while the honor was orchestrated by G d, it was accorded by the people who actually waited for her. G d arranged that the progress of an entire nation was put on hold so the people could show their appreciation for the selfless act of a young girl many decades earlier.

There are few virtues more promoted in the Torah than that of gratitude. Being sincerely grateful for good things done to us is a mark of humility and grace. No matter how many years have passed, it is never too late to show appreciation.

Gratitude is not only something one should feel; it should be displayed in public, and if possible before the person who was responsible for the good deed.

The Torah wants us to know that it was important to the Almighty that the Israelites use that moment of Miriam's personal distress to show her the honor she earned all those years earlier.

Adapted from Likkutei Sichot, vol. 18, Parshat Behaalotecha V.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Numbers 12:1.
2. Rashi Ibid.
3. Often translated as "leprosy," but which in reality has little in common with that condition.
4. Numbers 12:15-16.
5. Exodus 2:4.
6. Sotah 1:9.
7. Deuteronomy 8:15.
8. Numbers 12:14.
9. Leviticus 13:46.

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https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/5138662/jewish/Who-Honored-Miriam-and-How.htm

Why Moses Needed the Elders

By Menachem Feldman* © Chabad 2021

As the Jewish people leave Mount Sinai, after camping at the mountain for just short of a year, the trouble begins.

They have everything they need, they are protected from the elements by the clouds of glory, they drink water from the miraculous well, and they eat the mysterious "food from the heavens," the manna.

And yet, they begin to complain. As the Torah relates:

*But the multitude among them began to have strong cravings. Then even the children of Israel once again began to cry, and they said, "Who will feed us meat? We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge, the cucumbers, the watermelons, the leeks, the onions and the garlic. But now, our bodies are dried out, for there is nothing at all; we have nothing but manna to look at."*¹

Moses, the most patient and devoted leader, who stood by the people through thick and thin, who did not abandon them even when they committed the cardinal sin of serving the golden calf, throws his hands up in frustration:

Moses said to the L rd, "Why have You treated Your servant so badly? Why have I not found favor in Your eyes, that You place the burden of this entire people upon me? Did I conceive this entire people? Did I give birth to them, that You say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom as the

*nurse carries the suckling,' to the Land You promised their forefathers? Where can I get meat to give all these people? For they are crying on me, saying, 'Give us meat to eat.' Alone I cannot carry this entire people, for it is too hard for me. If this is the way You treat me, please kill me, if I have found favor in Your eyes, so that I not see my misfortune."*²

And G d listens.

When Moses initially resisted assuming the leadership of the Jewish people, G d spent seven days cajoling him to accept. And here, without the slightest word of protest, G d accepts Moses' claim that he is incapable of leading the nation all alone:

Then the L rd said to Moses,

*"Assemble for Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the people's elders and officers, and you shall take them to the Tent of Meeting, and they shall stand there with You. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will increase the spirit that is upon you and bestow it upon them. Then they will bear the burden of the people with you so that you need not bear it alone."*³

Granted, asking for meat is not the most spiritual exercise, but what is it about the request that so offends Moses? And if Moses, the model leader, can no longer lead such a difficult people, then what secret do the seventy elders possess that will allow them to succeed where Moses apparently failed?

The people are not asking for meat. They have plenty of cattle. The meat is an excuse to complain. They resent the moral and religious restrictions the Torah places on their personal life. They long for Egypt where, though slaves to Pharaoh, they could go home and be free from moral restrictions. As Rashi explains:

"Which we ate in Egypt free of charge": If you say that the Egyptians gave them fish free of charge, does it not already say, "Straw shall not be given to you"?⁴ Now if straw was not given free of charge, was fish given to them free of charge? So what does "free of charge" mean? Free from [the burden of the] divine commandments.⁵

Moses, who has spent every moment of the past year studying and teaching Torah to the Jews, sees this complaint for what it is: a rejection of everything he stands for. Moses is trying to elevate his beloved people to a higher plane. To refine their character. To place them on a spiritual path. Yet all they see are restrictions. Moses is dejected. He feels that there is an unbridgeable gap between himself and the people.

He turns to G d and cries: "Did I conceive this entire people? Did I give birth to them?" What he is saying is that, despite everything he has done, the people don't view him as a loving parent who has their best interests in mind. They see him as an old man trying to impose his way of life. They see him as standing in the way of the lifestyle they want to live.

G d understands.

G d understands that the people failed. They failed to appreciate the greatness of Moses. They failed to acknowledge his great love and sacrifice for them. There is, however, no point in pushing Moses to lead alone, as he cannot be effective unless the people see him for who he is: someone who cares for them like a mother cares for the child she conceived and gave birth to. At this point, G d tells Moses to find seventy leaders, but not just any seventy. This is not about appointing people to help Moses; this is about selecting leaders whom the people trust. Leaders whom the people know would sacrifice anything for their wellbeing, as a mother would for her children.

These elders have a track record. These are seventy people who suffered terribly to protect the Jews back in Egypt. As Rashi explains:

"Whom you know to be . . .": Those whom you know that they were appointed as officers over them in Egypt [to oversee] the rigorous labor, and they had mercy on them and were beaten on their account, as it says, "The officers of the children of Israel were beaten."⁶ Now they shall be chosen in their greatness, just as they had suffered in their [Israel's] distress.⁷

The seventy elders have no power that Moses does not possess. In fact, their leadership comes from “the spirit that is upon you [Moses].”⁸ Moses is the source of the inspiration, but if the people don’t see him as a mother, then they need the elders, whom they trust, to lead them toward the teachings of Moses.

The Torah is giving us a message: if you want to have any chance at influencing people, make sure that they have no doubt that you care deeply for them. As the saying goes: people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Source: Based on Mishpetei Torah, by Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Shpitz, on Parshat Behaalotecha.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Numbers 11:4–6.
2. Numbers 11:11–15.
3. Numbers 11:16–17.
4. Exodus 5:18.
5. Rashi, Numbers 11:5.
6. Exodus 5:14.
7. Rashi, Numbers 11:16.
8. Numbers 11:17.

* Director of Lifelong Learning at the Chabad in Greenwich, CT.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/2890358/jewish/Why-Moses-Needed-the-Elders.htm

Beha'alotecha: The Permanence of Temporary Situations

by Rabbi Moshe Wisniefsky *

"At G-d's bidding they encamped, and at G-d's bidding they traveled." (Numbers 9:23)

The Jewish people never knew in advance how long they would be staying at any given camp—it could have been for a day or for years. Nonetheless, they would set up the Tabernacle in its entirety at each encampment, following G-d's instructions to keep the Tabernacle functioning at all times.

This teaches us two important lessons. First, we should recognize that it is G-d who leads us through all our journeys in life—whether geographical, emotional, mental, or spiritual. We should indeed make our own plans based on our lives' goals, but at the same time, we must realize that G-d knows when it is in our best interest to stay put or to move on to the next station in life, and that He arranges things accordingly.

Second, we should not “put our lives on hold” when we are in temporary situations. Since G-d is beyond time and place, when we connect with Him even for one moment, that moment lasts for all time. Whether a personal journey lasts a day or a decade, we can make it into a sanctuary, imbued with the eternal permanence of G-d's presence.

– From *Daily Wisdom* #1

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291 Kingston Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11213

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Volume 27, Issue 32

Shabbat Parashat Behaalotcha

5781 B"H

Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

Power or Influence?

There is a lovely moment in this week's parsha that shows Moses at the height of his generosity as a leader. It comes after one of his deepest moments of despair. The people, as is their wont, have been complaining, this time about the food. They are tired of the manna. They want meat instead. Moses, appalled that they have not yet learned to accept the hardships of freedom, prays to die. "If this is how You are going to treat me," he says to God, "please go ahead and kill me right now – if I have found favour in Your eyes – and do not let me face my own ruin." (Num. 11:15)

God tells him to appoint seventy elders to help him with the burdens of leadership. He does so, and the Divine Spirit rests on them all. But it also rests on two other men, Eldad and Medad, who were not among the chosen seventy. Evidently Moses had selected six men out of each of the twelve tribes, making 72, and then removed Eldad and Medad by lot. Nonetheless, they too were caught up in the moment of inspiration.[1]

Joshua, Moses' deputy, warns that this is a potential threat, but Moses replies with splendid magnanimity: "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people were Prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon each of them!" (Num. 11:29)

This contrasts sharply with Moses' conduct later when his leadership is challenged by Korach and his followers. On that occasion he showed no gentleness or generosity. To the contrary, in effect he prays that the ground swallow them up, that "they go down alive into the realm of the dead." (Num. 16:28-30) He is sharp, decisive and unforgiving. Why the different response to Korach on the one hand, and Eldad and Medad on the other?

To understand this, it is essential to grasp the difference between two concepts often confused, namely power and influence. We tend to think of them as similar if not identical. People of power have influence. People of

influence have power. But the two are quite distinct and operate by a different logic, as a simple thought experiment will show.

Imagine you have total power. Whatever you say, goes. Then one day you decide to share your power with nine others. You now have, at best, one-tenth of the power you had before. Now imagine instead that you have a certain measure of influence. You decide to share that influence with nine others, whom you make your partners. You now have ten times the influence you had before, because instead of just you there are now ten people delivering the message.

Power works by division, influence by multiplication. Power, in other words, is a zero-sum game: the more you share, the less you have. Influence is not like this, as we see with our Prophets. When it comes to leadership-as-influence, the more we share the more we have.

Throughout his forty years at the head of the nation, Moses held two different leadership roles. He was a Prophet, teaching Torah to the Israelites and communicating with God. He was also the functional equivalent of a king, leading the people on their journeys, directing their destiny and supplying them with their needs. The one leadership role he did not have was that of High Priest, which went to his brother Aaron.

We can see this duality later in the narrative when he inducts Joshua as his successor. God commands him: "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man of spirit, and lay your hand on him ... Give him some of your honour (hod) so that the whole Israelite community will obey him. (Num. 27:18-20)

Note the two different acts. One, "lay your hand [vesamachta] on him," is the origin of term s'michah, whereby a Rabbi ordains a pupil, granting him the authority to make rulings in his own right. The Rabbis saw their role as a continuation of that of the Prophets ("Moses received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the Prophets; and the Prophets handed it down to the men of the Great Assembly," Mishnah Avot 1:1). By this act of s'michah, Moses was handing on to Joshua his role as Prophet.

By the other act, "Give him some of your honour," he was inducting him into the role of King. The Hebrew word hod, honour, is associated with kingship, as in the biblical

phrase hod malchut, "the honour of kingship" (Dan. 11:21; 1 Chronicles, 29:25).

Kings had power – including that of life and death (see Joshua 1:18). Prophets had none, but they had influence, not just during their lifetimes but, in many cases, to this day. To paraphrase Kierkegaard: when a King dies his power ends. When a Prophet dies his influence begins.

Now we see exactly why Moses' reaction was so different in the case of Eldad and Medad, and that of Korach and his followers. Eldad and Medad sought and received no power. They merely received the same influence – the Divine Spirit that emanated from Moses. They became Prophets. That is why Moses said, "I wish that all the Lord's people were Prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit on them."

Korach, or at least some of his followers, sought power, and power is a zero-sum game. When it comes to malchut, the leadership of power, the rule is: "There is one leader for the generation, not two." [2] In kingship, a bid for power is an attempted coup d'état and has to be resisted by force. Otherwise the result is a division of the nation into two, as happened after the death of King Solomon. Moses could not let the challenge of Korach go unchallenged without fatefully compromising his own authority.

So Judaism clearly demarcates between leadership as influence and leadership by power. It is unqualified in its endorsement of the first, and deeply ambivalent about the second. Tanach is a sustained polemic against the use of power. All power, according to the Torah, rightly belongs to God. The Torah recognises the need, in an imperfect world, for the use of coercive force in maintaining the rule of law and the defence of the realm. Hence its endorsement of the appointment of a King, should the people so desire it. [3] But this is clearly a concession, not an ideal. [4]

The real leadership embraced by Tanach and by rabbinic Judaism is that of influence, above all that of Prophets and teachers. As we have noted many times before, that is the ultimate accolade given to Moses by tradition. We know him as Moshe Rabbeinu, Moses our teacher. Moses was the first of a long line of figures in Jewish history – among them Ezra, Hillel, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai, Rabbi

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By Dr. Larry Bryskin
on occasion of yahrzeit of his great aunt
Esther Baron, a"h,
(Esther bas Yitzchok Ya'akov)
Sivan 24

Akiva, the Sages of the Talmud and the scholars of the Middle Ages – who represent one of Judaism's most revolutionary ideas: the teacher as hero.

Judaism was the first and greatest civilisation to predicate its very survival on education, houses of study, and learning as a religious experience higher even than prayer.[5] The reason is this: leaders are people able to mobilise others to act in certain ways. If they achieve this only because they hold power over them, this means treating people as means, not ends – as things not persons. Not accidentally, the single greatest writer on leadership as power was Machiavelli.

The other approach is to speak to people's needs and aspirations, and teach them how to achieve these things together as a group. That is done through the power of a vision, force of personality, the ability to articulate shared ideals in a language with which people can identify, and the capacity to "raise up many disciples" who will continue the work into the future. Power diminishes those on whom it is exercised. Influence and education lift and enlarge them.

Judaism is a sustained protest against what Hobbes called the "general inclination of all mankind," nameless "a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death." [6] That may be the reason why Jews have seldom exercised power for prolonged periods of time but have had an influence on the world out of all proportion to their numbers.

Not all of us have power, but we all have influence. That is why we can each be leaders. The most important forms of leadership come not with position, title or robes of office, not with prestige and power, but with the willingness to work with others to achieve what we cannot do alone; to speak, to listen, to teach, to learn, to treat other people's views with respect even if they disagree with us, to explain patiently and cogently why we believe what we believe and why we do what we do; to encourage others, praise their best endeavours and challenge them to do better still.

Always choose influence rather than power. It helps change people into people who can change the world.

[1] See Sanhedrin 17a

[2] Sanhedrin 8a.

[3] Deuteronomy 17:15-20; I Samuel 8.

[4] So, at any rate, is the view of Ibn Ezra, Rabbeinu Bachya and Abarbanel.

[5] See Shabbat 10a.

[6] Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, part 1, ch. 11.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

The Jewish people seemed poised for entry into the Promised Land when suddenly the nation became a group of kvetchers, "complaining evilly in the ears of the Lord....

saying 'who will feed us meat? Remember the fish which we ate in Egypt for free, the cucumbers, the watermelons, the onions and the garlic'" (Numbers 11:1,4, 5)

The degeneration continues, Moses cries out to God that he has no meat to give the nation and that he can no longer bear the burden of leading them. The Divine response is to tell Moses to gather 70 men from among the elders of Israel who will help bear the burden and upon whom the spirit of the Lord will rest (11:16,17).

Why are the Jews so vexed and unsettled and how does God's response alleviate their feelings? They want meat and God tells Moses to give them 70 rabbis! After all of the miracles of the Exodus, it's difficult to understand the disillusionment of the Israelites and even more difficult to understand the solution offered by God.

I believe that the subtext of this dialogue between the Israelites, Moses and God is that Moses is now being confronted by a new generation, by the youth who left Egypt and are now maturing into adulthood. This new generation has different needs and expectations than had their parents. Each generation requires its own teachers; each generation has its own dreams, needs and vision. The adults who left Egypt with Moses required a Rav; their children, who are now growing to maturity, require a Rebbe.

It has often been said that the difference between a Rav and a Rebbe is that when a Rav chastises, everyone thinks he is speaking to their neighbor, whereas when a Rebbe chastises everyone feels that he is speaking personally to them. I believe there is another difference which emanates from this one. A Rav speaks with the voice of tradition and conveys the words of God to the entire nation, giving a message which expresses the vision of our eternal Torah for all generations. A Rebbe speaks personally to every individual, taking the eternal message of God and making it relevant to their needs. The Rav speaks to the generation; the Rebbe speaks to the individual in each generation.

Moses was an exalted prophet who came to the Israelites from the faraway palace of Pharaoh. He continued to lead them from the Tent of the Divine Meeting three parasangs (about 10.5 miles) from the encampment of the Israelites. Moses did not speak to the Israelites with his own voice since "he was heavy of speech and of uncircumcised tongue". He thundered with the voice of God presenting the Divine message of freedom and responsibility. His power which emanated from the Divine enabled him to unite the nation and imbue them with the confidence to follow him and God into the barren desert. Moses came from the distance and looked out into the distance. He was a ro'eh (with an aleph); a lofty and majestic seer.

Likutei Divrei Torah

Now that the Jews had collectively left the land of oppression, followed their seer into the desert and were about to begin a new life in the Promised Land, they had to put the general and elusive notion of national freedom into personal perspective. Each individual had to understand how to utilize the gift of freedom to find his/her individual purpose and his/her individual expression within the context of God's land and God's Torah. Each individual had to find his/her own instrument within the divine symphony orchestra. For this, they required an individual pastor (ro'eh with an ayen and not an aleph). They could not articulate this need because they didn't quite understand it. They thought their discomfort stemmed from boredom with the uniform, daily manna. That's why they were not even sure which food they wanted; meat, watermelon, leeks or garlic. What they really needed was individual nourishment for their souls. At first, Moses too did not understand what they needed and so, when he sent out the scouts to tour the land and inspire the people with its bounty, he told them "strengthen yourselves and take the fruit of the land" and bring back luscious grapes.

Ultimately, Moses understands this new generation requires a personalized Rebbe rather than a God-imbued Rav. This was a trait which one as close to the Loving Lord of Wisdom and Spirit as Moses was God as Moses, did not have the time or patience to develop. His closeness to God and Eternity conflicted with the immediate individual needs of 600,000 Jews! Moses recognizes that this new generation requires a new leader: "Let the Lord God of the differing spirits of the various flesh and blood human beings appoint a leader over the congregation, one who will take them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the Lord not be like sheep without a shepherd." (Numbers 27:16).

Joshua was a very different type of leader to Moses, a great scholar and prophet, but also a man of the people. This made him the right person to bring this generation into the Promised Land. They had cried out for meat but what they really needed were rabbinic leaders, who would prophesy from within the encampment rather than from the distant Tent of Meeting where God resided. They needed a Rebbe!

The Person in the Parsha **Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb** **Earning Self-Esteem**

It was a lesson I learned long ago, when I was a high school classroom teacher. I was new at this line of work and found that my greatest challenge was to find ways to motivate the students. I tried various approaches, which all were basically attempts to motivate by giving. I tried giving special prizes and awards, granting extra privileges, and even resorting to outright bribery in order to get the students to

pay attention, do their homework, and learn the subject matter.

It was a wise mentor who taught me that you can't motivate students by giving to them. Rather, you must find ways to encourage them to give to others. The student who gives to others feels important, and it is the consequent sense of self-esteem which is the most powerful motivator of all.

I'll never forget the first time I tried that strategy. I approached the most recalcitrant student in the entire class. He happened to be a very bright young man, who was, in today's terminology, "totally turned off" to his studies.

I asked him to assist two weaker students with their daily assignment. I caught him completely off guard, so that his reaction was one of utter surprise.

"Who, me?" he exclaimed. "Why should I help those two dunces? If they can't figure it out for themselves, let them flunk."

Although I was convinced that any appeal to his sense of altruism would be futile, I nevertheless gave it a try. I told him that for a society to function successfully the haves must help the have-nots, the strong must aid the weak, and those who are blessed with talent must share their gifts with those who were less fortunate.

It was the phrase "blessed with talent" that did the trick, for he responded, "Do you really think I'm blessed with talent? I guess you're right. I am a talented dude, and I'm going to try to teach those blockheads a thing or two. But if I don't succeed, it won't be my fault!"

He did succeed, and very dramatically. And he recognized that if he was to succeed again at this tutorial task, he would have to be even better prepared next time. He went home that night and studied hard and was indeed even more successful with his two "blockheads" the next day.

I won't go on to provide the details of my strategy of applying this technique to the rest of the class. Instead I want to demonstrate that this secret of human motivation is implicit in a brief passage in this week's Torah portion, Beha'alotcha. In this parsha, the Torah devotes all of the tenth chapter of Numbers to a detailed description of the sequence in which the tribes marched through the desert. About two thirds of the way into this chapter, we unexpectedly encounter the following conversational interlude:

And Moses said to Chovav, son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which the Lord has said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us and we will be generous with you; for the Lord has promised to be generous to Israel."

"I will not go," he replied to him, "but will return to my native land."

"He said, 'Please do not leave us, inasmuch as you know where we should camp in the wilderness and can be our guide [literally read as "eyes"]. So if you come with us, we will extend to you the same bounty that the Lord grants us.'" (Numbers 10:29-32)

That ends the dialogue, and we are never explicitly told whether or not Moses' second attempt at persuasion convinced Chovav to accompany the Children of Israel. His first attempt, promising to be generous to him, was rejected emphatically by Chovav with a resounding, "I will not go!"

What did Moses change in his second attempt? Quite simply, he told Chovav that he would not be merely the passive recipient of another's generosity. Rather, Moses assured Chovav that he had expertise which was indispensable to the Jewish people. He could give them the guidance through the wilderness that they desperately required. He would not just be a taker, but a giver as well.

In short, Moses was appealing to Chovav's sense of self-esteem. He was saying to him, "You are an important person. Your talents are needed. You are an actor with a part to play in this drama."

What I was doing, as a fledgling teacher so many years ago, to that turned-off student, was essentially precisely what Moses was trying to do with Chovav in his second attempt to convince him to accompany the Children of Israel upon their journey through the desert.

When reading the text, one can easily assume that Moses learned a great lesson which caused him to abandon the strategy of promising to be generous. Instead, he adopted an entirely different strategy, one which conveyed the message to Chovav that he would not merely be a consumer of favors. Rather, he would earn the Lord's generosity because of the valuable contribution that he would make, and that only he could make.

There is a lesson here not just for teachers and students, or leaders and followers. There is a lesson here for all of us in dealing with other human beings. We must be sensitive to their needs for self-esteem. We must recognize their talents and what they can bring to bear upon whatever task lies at hand. When a person is convinced of his or her own importance and value, he or she will be motivated and will act accordingly.

Understanding the dialogue between Moses and Chovav in this manner allows us to readily accept the conclusion of our Sages. They filled in the "rest of the story" and assured us that Chovav was finally convinced by Moses' second argument and did indeed join his fate

Likutei Divrei Torah

and those of his descendants to the destiny of the Jewish people.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Why Wasn't Moshe Rabbeinu Depressed?

At the beginning of the parsha, the Torah gives Aharon the mitzvah of kindling the lights of the Menorah in the Mishkan. Rashi here asks why this mitzvah immediately follows that of the offerings of the Princes at the end of Parshas Naso. Rashi answers that when Aharon witnessed the offerings of all the Princes, he became depressed that neither he nor his Tribe were included in that dedication ceremony. Rashi says that Hashem therefore consoled Aharon, by telling him, "I swear, your portion is greater than theirs—you will kindle the Menorah".

Rashi says, as it were, that Hashem gave Aharon a consolation prize. He did not have the opportunity to participate in the Mishkan dedication with the other Princes, but he would have an opportunity for an even greater privilege.

The Ramban explains that this alludes to the Menorah lit in each generation by all Jews to commemorate the Chanukah story, in which Aharon's descendants played a major role. There are many things to comment on this Rashi, but I once heard an interesting insight from the Rosh Yeshiva [of Ner Yisroel in Baltimore], Rav Yaakov Weinberg, Shlita.

Aharon was supposedly depressed because the dedication of the Mishkan did not include him or his tribe. However, who was the titular head of the Tribe of Levi? Seemingly, the head of the tribe was Moshe Rabbeinu, not Aharon. Moshe was the head of all of Israel; he was a greater Novi than Aharon, so he was clearly the official leader of the Tribe of Levi.

So who should get depressed here? If anyone, Moshe should have been depressed. Aharon is the head of the Kohanim, who are only a subset of Shevet Levi. Yet it was he who felt depressed at the fact that the Leviim were not represented at the dedication. Why not Moshe Rabbeinu?

Rav Weinberg explained that Moshe Rabbeinu, by becoming the leader of all Israel, was no longer a member of the Tribe of Levi. When someone is the leader of the generation, he loses his provincial and parochial interests. He is no longer Shevet Levi; he is the 'Am'—the People. He embodies the Nation—Reuvain, Shimeon, Yehudah, Dan, everyone!

For example, I'havdil, the President of the United States no longer represents his home state—that is the job of the Governor. The President has gone on to achieve greater honor and higher office. The President can no longer be a Texan or a New Yorker or a Marylander—he must represent all the people.

That is the distinction between Aharon and Moshe. Moshe, by becoming the Rabbi of Israel, ceased to be merely a Levi. He left behind any personal interests and biases and became the representative of the entire nation.

Showing Appreciation for Miriam After 80 Years

Now we skip from the first Rashi in the Parsha to the last Rashi. The end of the parsha contains another famous incident. The Torah says that Miriam had complaints about her brother Moshe, and she talked about these complaints. Hashem Himself comes down and says, do not speak about Moshe; do not judge him by the standards of a regular human being —“Not so is My Servant Moshe, in My entire house he is the trusted one...” [Bamidbar 12:7].

Moshe was in a league by himself. Miriam was stricken with tzora’as [a skin disease caused at a spiritual level by improper speech] for talking about Moshe. The law concerning such a person who is stricken with tzora’as is that they need to be sent outside the camp. Miriam was in fact sent outside the camp of Israel for seven days. The pasuk says that “...The nation did not travel until Miriam was brought back in.” [12:15].

Rashi, quoting the Talmud [Sotah 9b] says that this honor (that the entire Jewish people waited for her) was accorded to Miriam as reward for waiting by the Nile for her infant brother Moshe (to see who would pick up the basket in which he was floating).

The question can be asked—why now? It is 80 years since Miriam waited for Moshe. Why is suddenly now the time for her to receive a reward?

At a simple level, we could answer—now is when she needed it. She is down and out, so to speak, so now is a good time to give her honor.

The Shemen HaTov by Rabbi Dov Weinberger gives a better answer. He says that the reason why now was the appropriate time to reward Miriam is because now we—as a people—recognized what she did for us.

Sometimes a person does an act, and even though we appreciate the act, we cannot yet appreciate it fully. However, at this point, we retroactively realized what Miriam did—once we realize who Moshe Rabbeinu really is. Now is when Hashem gives personal testimony and says something about Moshe Rabbeinu that He never said about any other human being: “You do not realize who Moshe is. I speak to him mouth to mouth. He is in a league by himself!”

They had been living with Moshe Rabbeinu. They became accustomed to Moshe Rabbeinu. They forgot who Moshe Rabbeinu was. Therefore, Hashem tells the people, “There is

no one who was ever like him; there never will be any one like him.”

Now, eighty years later, they can realize what Miriam did. That act—standing and waiting, making sure that all would be all right with her brother, eighty years earlier—saved a Moshe Rabbeinu! Now they are finally able to appreciate this fully.

Sometimes we do a chessed [kindness] and we do not realize the implications. Sometimes it takes time, perhaps a week, a month, or a year. Sometimes it takes 80 years or longer to realize “Wow! What a remarkable act!” That is what they finally realize here. Now, eighty years later, they needed to show their appreciation.

Dvar Torah Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

How do we know that every single one of us can feel our own special connection to the Torah?

Parshat Behaalotecha tells us “the ark of the covenant of Hashem travelled ahead of the nation”. From Joshua, chapter three we learn that there was actually a gap of around 2000 cubits, that’s approximately half a mile between the Ark ahead and the people following behind it. Was this not a mark of disrespect? Surely here we should have had a process of ‘levaya’, of accompaniment. The nation should have surrounded the ark to give it due honour but instead, there was this huge gap?

Actually, our tradition tells us that there was a purpose for the distance between the Ark and the people behind. You see, had we surrounded the Ark, the vast majority of people would have had to rely on the witness statements of those who were closest to it. Instead, thanks to the gap and the people being spread out widely, every single individual could focus their own personal attention on the Ark, they could see it for themselves and they could develop and establish their own special, personal connection with it.

I believe this speaks volumes for us today. Baruch Hashem, we are so privileged because each and every one of us can achieve our own personal connection to the Torah. We don’t have to rely on the evidence of others. For each one of us in the ups and downs of our lives, the Torah is there to assist us. We can be inspired by the role models, we can be guided by the Torah’s narratives and our lives can be transformed thanks to the incredible mitzvot of the Torah.

In our davening we say please Hashem give us our חֶלֶק, our portion, in the Torah. Baruch Hashem that is achievable. Each one of us can have our חֶלֶק, our own personal connection to the most incredible, God-given resource, there for us to have a life of meaning and joy

Likutei Divrei Torah

always.

OTS Dvar Torah

At God’s Command They Shall Travel Rabbi Nechemia Krakover

God tests the desert generation in a way that underscores the importance of commitment and the power of divine truth – travelling and camping at His command.

Can any of us say we’ve never faced a tough choice or wondered why Hashem couldn’t just send us a message with instructions? Couldn’t an angel or a prophet just beam down and guide us?

This doesn’t happen, of course, and we must make our decisions on our own. What would happen, though, if this were possible? Imagine that every time you needed to make a choice, whenever you felt conflicted, the decision were to instantly descend from Heaven. A bat kol, a heavenly voice, would go out and tell us what to do. What would our world look like? Are we really prepared to live in such a reality?

It would be a world without any independent decision-making, creativity, mistakes or failures. Everything would be in accordance with the law, and with the truth. This would be a reality prone to change at any given moment. A world over which people have no control. Living in this kind of world might seem easy, but in practice, it would be rather challenging. This is precisely the world that the Israelites lived in as they sojourned through the desert.

Within a series of verses, our Parasha describes how the Israelites trudged through the desert, and the expression tying all of these verses together is “At a command of Hashem the Israelites broke camp, and at a command of the Hashem they made camp”. The pillars of clouds and the pillars of fire guided the people. Within moments, they would set out, and within moments, they would set up camp. At times, they would travel for days at a time, pausing only briefly, while at other times, they would spend several months encamped somewhere. Imagine a family walking for several days until they finally stop, start unpacking their belongings... and suddenly resume walking. At their next stop, they don’t unpack. Instead, they wait until they begin travelling again, but this time, it is a long wait. They begin unpacking, but before they know it, the set out once more on their journey.

This aptly illustrates the verse in the Book of Deuteronomy: “... that He might test you by hardships to learn what was in your hearts: whether you would keep His commandments or not.” Living this way for forty years was one of the hardest trials a human being could endure. It meant complete obedience, with no control over anything, and with no room for error or change. Apparently, a generation that can withstand this trial is indeed a dor de’ah – a purely spiritual generation. It is very challenging to be able to stand on our own two

feet and remain strong and stable. Which of us would rise to this type of challenge?

Hashem has the Israelites face this trial in order to underscore the importance of commitment and the power of divine truth – a reality without compromise or decision-making. At its center stands the Divine attribute of absolute judgement, according to which people do what is right, regardless of how complex reality is. This is the commitment that each of us is truly required to adhere to – to travel and camp at the command of Hashem.

What, then, do we learn from this? Today, we live in a completely different world, one where we seem to be in control. Are we truly making the best of this world? Are we managing to channel our decisions toward the truth we are expected to uphold? What is the gap between how we conduct ourselves and how we would conduct ourselves, if we were to act at the command of Hashem?

The desert generation was an anomaly, but it is certainly a generation beckoning us with a call to action to recalibrate our decisions – and to choose to be committed.

At Hashem's command we shall camp, and at Hashem's command we shall travel.

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Mordechai Willig

Our Reaction to Tragedy, War, and Antisemitism

I. Last week we celebrated 3,333 years since the Revelation at Sinai. The number three is found five times in the Gemara (Shabbos 88a) in a blessing due to Hashem. He gave us a Torah of three parts (Torah, Neviim, Kesuvim - Rashi), to a nation of three parts (Kohein, Levi, Yisrael - Rashi) through a third child (Moshe, following Miriam and Aharon - Rashi) on the third day (of abstinence. Rashi, see Shemos 19:11,15) in the third month (from yetzias Mitzrayim, Shemos 19:1).

The Maharal (Tiferes Yisrael, 11) explains that every creation is flawed as it departs from "yosher," the straight middle path. The only exception is Torah, the true "yosher." The number three represents the middle straight path, veering neither right or left.

The nation of three refers to the three patriarchs (unlike Rashi). Yaakov, the middle between Avraham (chesed) and Yitzchok (gevura) is called Yeshurun, an appellation given to the entire nation (Devarim 33:5). Moshe, the third child, represents yosher. He could not tolerate injustice and intervened three times to protest it. He killed the Egyptian who was hitting a Hebrew man (Shemos 2:11,12), reprimanded a Hebrew man fighting with another (2:13) and saved Yisro's daughters from the shepherds who chased them away (2:17). Similarly, the third month is in the middle, just before the heat of the

summer, and the third day represents yosher as well. We must bless Hashem for the Torah, the only perfect creation. It is associated with four other three's and was given to us 3,333 years ago.

The three-faceted blessing of the Kohanim (Bamidbar 6:24-26) can be understood along the same lines. The first beracha refers to material prosperity, and the second to Torah. Beracha number three alludes to a proper middle ground, combining the first 2 blessings to achieve inner peace (see Birchah Kohanim: L'bracha v'lo l'klala).

II. The three national tragedies of the last three weeks demand teshuva and introspection. The COVID-19 crisis continues to devastate humanity and lingers in our own community as well. Sadly, the recent CDC relaxation of masking and distancing requirements for vaccinated persons has caused friction with individuals who refuse to vaccinate. Balancing safety and unity can be challenging, but must be approached with sensitivity, so that our shuls can bring everyone together once again peacefully. While this is an international issue, it seems more divisive within Am Yisrael, as the Kli Yakar bemoans (Vayirka 26:36).

How do we respond to the Meron tragedy? As the shiva for the victims ended, we read (Vayikra 26:36,37) "The sounds of a rustling leaf will pursue them. They will fall, but without a pursuer. They will stumble over one another as in flight from a sword, but there is no pursuer." These words, eerily hinting to death by stampede, are interpreted by the Kli Yakar as follows:

This [stumbling] refers to the divisiveness that is common in Am Yisrael, more than in other nations. Each one pushes his friend and tries to push him from his place, to roll over and fall on top of him. Every member of Yisrael is pushed as a leaf by the wind, the four kingdoms called four winds (Daniel 7:2). Despite the weakness caused by our enemies, each leaf pushes and hits the leaf near it. So, too, a Jew, despite being like a wind-blown leaf pursued by the enemy, pursues another Jew. He attacks him verbally, maligning him to the nations or in the Jewish street by lashon hara. In our generation, this itself causes the extension of our galus.

Unfortunately our own generation, like that of the Kli Yakar, suffers from infighting which continues to extend our galus. On occasion, here in our galus, and even in Eretz Yisrael, it rises from verbal to physical, leading, to our great shame, to police intervention. This has occurred, even recently, in iconic Torah and Chassidic institutions, as publications in Eretz Yisrael after the Lag Baomer tragedy have noted.

Lag Baomer is a holiday because R' Akiva's twenty four thousand students, who perished between Pesach and Shavuot, stopped dying

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(Maharil). They stopped dying because they had already died! Why do we celebrate? The Pri Chadash (493:2) explains that the later students of R' Akiva did not die, but rather filled Eretz Yisrael with Torah, and established Torah for all generations (Bereishis Rabba 61:3, Yevamos 62b). They heeded R' Akiva's warning not to begrudge one another.

R' Shimon bar Yochai was one of those later students. The Kaf Hachaim (493:26) states that R' Akiva ordained his five later students, including R' Shimon bar Yochai, on Lag Baomer. This is why we celebrate Lag Baomer at Meron on the yahrzeit of R' Shimon bar Yochai. When our dancing turned into mourning (Eicha 5:15), we must respond to the tragedy by introspection and teshuva (Rambam Hilchos Taaniyos 1:3), particularly in the area of bein adam lachavero.

Biblical precedent for a sudden turn of events, from ecstasy to mourning, occurred on the day of the dedication of the Mishkan (Vayikra 9:24, 10:2,6). The nation rejoiced when the divine fire consume their sacrifices. The very next verse (10:1) tells of the unauthorized fire offered by Nadav and Avihu, after which divine fire consumed them. The entire house of Israel cried over their death by fire.

While Nadav and Avihu were on a level higher than we can even imagine, greater than Moshe and Aharon (Rashi 10:3), Chazal (Yalkut Shimoni 524) attribute their death to a variety of primarily interpersonal sins. As those nearest to Hashem (10:3), they, like R' Akiva's students, were held to a higher standard and punished for sins compared to a barely visible, hair-like thread (Yevamos 121b).

The tragic death of forty five holy souls on Lag Baomer in Meron indeed inspired a national day of mourning and a coming together of previously separate, and even hostile, groups in the mourning. The challenge is to continue to be unified going forward. Of course, as the more recent tragedy in Givat Zev reminds us, a primary lesson of Meron is to avoid dangerous situations whenever possible.

III. Remember, Hashem, for the children of Edom, Yom Yerushalyim. "They say 'Destroy, destroy to its very foundation'" (Tehillim 137:7). On Yom Yerushalyim 5781, the children of Yishmael, a branch of Edom (according to R' Saadia Gaon and Abarbenel, see Artscroll Daniel 2:40, 7:7) began a spree of thousands of rockets fired with the express intention of destroying Am Yisrael. Woe unto me, as I dwell near the tent of Kedar (Tehillim 120:5), the kingdom of Yishmael (Radak), those who hate peace (6). I am peace, but when I speak, they are for war (7).

This jihad, began with a squabble over property in Yerushalyim. It is a holy war, waged by haters of Israel, who are called haters of Hashem (Rashi Badmidbar 10:35). It

begin with land for which we paid, as in Chevron (Bereishis 23:16), Shechem (33:19), and Yerushalyim (Shmuel 2 24:21-24).). More fundamentally, it goes back to the very beginning (Rashi Bereishis 1:1). The nations of the world say "You are bandits, for you have conquered Eretz Yisrael." We respond "The whole world belongs to Hashem. He created it, and He gave Eretz Yisrael to us."

The Be'er Yosef (Parshas Shelach) explains that any bandit can make such a claim. Our response is valid only because, as the Shela states, it was impossible to conquer Eretz Yisrael without Divine assistance (Bamidbar 13:27,28,31, Devarim 9:13). This proves the biblical statement that the land was given to us (Bereishis 13:15,17).

The spies reported (Bamidbar 13:33) "We were like grasshoppers in our eyes, and so we were in their eyes." The Be'er Yosef cites Bava Kama (116b) that grasshoppers steal the grain of everyone. If we view ourselves as thieves, the nations will reach the same conclusions. Sadly, many Jews today fail to recognize our Divine biblical right to Eretz Yisrael and even reject Israel's right of self-defense against murderous jihadists (Chet Hameraglim: Then and Now).

How do we, faithful Jews, respond to the ongoing national crisis and tragic deaths? We must pray for peace. "If Hashem will not guard the city, in vain is the watchman vigilant" (Tehillim 127:1). "Pray for the peace of Yerushalyim" (122:6). "May there be peace in your wall, serenity in your palaces" (7). The Malbim explains: "if the tribes living around Yerushalyim will unite, and there will be no fights and disputes around its walls between one tribe and another, then there will be serenity in your inner palaces."

Our prayers must be accompanied by a resolution to pursue peace between the different tribes of Am Yisrael. Sadly, even in Yerushalyim itself, there are vicious disputes, sometimes even violent, between its Jewish factions. Tehilim neged tilim, prayers to be saved from rockets, do not suffice. The Iron Dome, and the brave soldiers to whom we must be so grateful, do not suffice. We must achieve greater internal peace in order for our prayers for peace from our enemies to be answered.

"Yerushalyim, the rebuilt, is like a city that is united together" (120:3). We became chaveirim, friends to one another (see Yerushalym Bava Kama 7:6). We saw this fifty four years ago, on the Shavuot following the original Yom Yerushalyim. We must attempt to recreate that unity achieved in the euphoria of victory and in the crisis which preceded it, and extend it to normal times.

"They encamped (vayachanu) in the desert, and Yisrael encamped (vayichan) there, opposite Mount Sinai" (Shemos 19:2). Rashi

explains the change from plural to singular: as one man with one heart, but all the other encampments were with complaints and argumentation. How was this unity achieved? Chasidic masters interpret vayichan homiletically: and they found favor (chein). As R' Elimelech of Lizhensk prayed, "Let each of us see the superlatives of our friends and not their shortcomings." As Maharal taught, no one is perfect. We achieve unity by focusing on the whole person, usually mostly positive, instead of harping on the inevitable imperfection.

Egypt was pursuing them (nosei'a, singular, Shemos 14:10). Rashi adds: with one heart, as one man. The order is reversed. Egypt achieved unity as one man only when they were with one heart, in this case to chase Am Yisrael. We must do better. We must be as one man even when we have not yet achieved with one heart, even when we disagree.

"Behold how good and how pleasant is the dwelling of brothers together - gam yachad", (Tehillim 133:1). Yachad, homiletically, means "Yesh Chilukai Dei'os." Even when we disagree, we must stay together. It is both good and pleasant, doing well by doing good.

Just as we encamped as one person with one heart 3,333 years ago, let us aim for greater unity now. May the three tragedies, COVID-19, Meron and the rocket barrage, inspire us to merit the building of the third Beis Hamikdash.

Rabbi Benjamin Yudin

Return to Shtender [excerpted]

The excitement of reexamining! How many books are there in the Torah? We know we call each volume a Chumash, meaning a fifth, noting there are five books of the Torah. The Gemara (Shabbos 116a) teaches in the name of Rebi (R' Yehuda HaNasi) that in reality there are seven books; the two pesukim of "Vayehi Binsoa" and "U'venucho Yomar" are surrounded by upside down letters (nuns), and Rebi understands the significance of this demarcation to be that these two verses consist of a book unto themselves. Thus the book of Bamidbar is actually divided into three books: that which comes prior to these verses is one book, these two verses are a second, and that which comes after are a third. Together with the remaining four books, there are a total of seven. Indeed, he brings support from Mishlei (9:1), "with all forms of wisdom did she build her house, she carved out its seven pillars."

It is interesting to note that the Kli Yakar asks that if this is correct, then a sefer of the Torah must contain a mitzvah, and suggests that the mitzvah contained herein is that of peru u'revu, procreation. This mitzvah is so important that it warrants a book unto itself as it enables the continuation of the world. Moreover, he notes that the second verse concludes inviting the Shechina to reside amongst the "rivevos alphei

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yisroel" which comes to 22,000, the minimal number necessary to host the Shechina.

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel (ibid) has a different explanation for the encasing of these verses by inverted "nuns", namely to teach that this is not the proper place for these verses. Rather, they belong fifty paragraphs earlier in Parshas Bamidbar (2:17) following the Torah's description of the formation of the order and traveling of the Jewish nation. First, we are taught about the camp of Judah, followed by that of Reuven, followed by the Mishkan. That is the appropriate place for these two verses as the Torah would be highlighting the primary component of the Mishkan, namely the Aron. The reason why it is placed here, explains Rabban Gamliel, is to create a buffer between three sins enumerated in succession. Had the three sins been presented in a consecutive order, it would have constituted a chazakah of poranos - misfortune. Therefore, to spare the Jewish nation any negative consequence, Hashem, in His kindness, places these two verses here. Indeed, when the moshiach comes, please God, speedily in our days nothing will change in the Torah except the future sefer Torah will be written with these verses in their ideal place - in the beginning of Bamidbar.

In identifying the first of the three sins, the Ramban points to the passuk (10:33) "Vayisu mehar Hashem." At first glance this is not a sin; one could even argue this is something virtuous since they followed His instructions. They waited until the anan (the cloud of glory) ascended from Mount Sinai and began marching toward the Land of Israel, where it is a mitzvah to come. On the surface, this is only praiseworthy. However, the Ramban notes that they left b'simcha, with gladness, with almost a sense of relief "as a child runs from school." Instead of sighing and expressing some nostalgic disappointment as to having to move and proceed to the next mitzvah, they left Har Sinai relieved as they were not getting any more mitzvos. This improper mindset is reckoned as a sin for our ancestors...

The Gemara (Megillah 29a) understands the verse in Yechezkel (11:16), "Va'ehi lachem l'mikdash m'eat - yet I have been for them a minor sanctuary" to mean that our synagogues and study halls are endowed with sanctity. Both the Rambam (Mitzvas Lo Sa'asei 65) and the Yere'im understand that the biblical mitzvah of "mikdeshei tira'u" (Vayikra 25:2) is applicable to our synagogues and study halls. The mindset must be that just as if two individuals have business to discuss and they meet twenty minutes before mincha to discuss the matter it goes without saying that they are not allowed to talk "shop-talk" in the Beis Haknesess, even when no minyan is going on, all the more so when tefillah is going on it is prohibited to talk during shul!

In addition, the Ramban in his commentary (Vayikra 26:1-2) on the last two verses of

Parshas Behar teaches that these two verses are a continuation of the above paragraph, where the Torah is speaking of a Jew who is tragically sold to a non-Jew. To that person, the Torah warns against idolatry, to observe the Shabbos, and to revere His sanctuary. The Ramban cites the Toras Kohanim (9:6) that the servant should not say "since my master is an idolater, I will be too; since my master is immoral and does not keep Shabbos, so too will I." The Ramban concludes by saying that these three mitzvos are avos-primary to connect the servant to his tradition and people.

The fact that the Ramban labels these three mitzvos as avos highlights for us the importance of the synagogue and study hall. When one abstains from idolatry they don't immediately feel His presence. So too, although by honoring and keeping the Shabbos not everyone is able to feel the Shechina, however upon entering the Beis Hamkidash it was palpable; you knew you were in His presence. The Torah commands (Shemos 23:17) "Year'eh kol zechurcha", everyone felt the closeness and presence of Hashem. The constant remembrance of the Beis Hamikdash to which we have been praying and pining for throughout our history is to endow within us the great reverence we feel for the Mikdash, and that reverence is to be palpable by our respect for the minor sanctuaries.

The Gemara (Berachos 8a) teaches in the name of Rav Chisda that, "a person should always enter through two doors in the synagogue." This is based on the passuk in Mishlei (8:34), "praiseworthy is the person who listens to Me, to hasten to my doors everyday." The use of the plural "doors" is the source for this teaching. The Yerushalmi (Berachos 5:1) sates explicitly that when one comes to pray in the synagogue they are to enter through two doors. The Bach (Shulchan, Orach Chaim 90:5) cites the opinion of Tosafos that one is not to begin davening immediately upon entering, but is to wait at least the distance it takes to walk through two doors.

The Sfas Emes says in the name of Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshischa that before praying one must pass through two doors, the door out of the earthly realm and the door into the heavenly realm, and only then should one pray. The ability to close the first doors, to completely shut off the phone (not on vibrate) and leave matters of the workplace behind is the first step in reentering the Beis Hakeneses. Failure to do so is in flagrant violation, if not literal then certainly the spirit of, Mikdeshai Tira'u - My sanctuary you shall revere, as understood in Yevamos (6b) that one may not enter the Temple Mount with his money belt. Just as the money belt is clearly demonstrative of his worldly affairs, so too is ones cell phone... In contrast to our ancestors of old who did not leave Har Sinai in appropriate way, let us be reverent, respectful, and appreciative of our Mikdash M'eat.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam

To Regain What Was Lost and More

And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moshe regarding the Cushite woman that he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman. They said, "Was it only to Moshe that HASHEM spoke? Did he not speak to us as well?" And HASHEM heard. Now Moshe was the exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth. (Bamidbar 12:1-2)

The cloud had departed from atop the Tent, and behold! Miriam was afflicted with Tzaraas, like snow! Aaron turned to Miriam and behold! She was afflicted with Tzaraas! (Bamidbar 12: 10)

Why was Miriam stricken with Tzaraas? She was a righteous woman. The Chofetz Chaim spells out all the mitigating circumstances. She loved Moshe, her brother. She was responsible for his having been born and she saved his life by placing him amongst the reeds and waiting for him to be rescued. She was speaking to Moshe's brother Aaron. They both had the utmost respect for Moshe. They only misunderstood that his level of prophecy was higher than what they had experienced. They were wondering why he should need to separate from his wife. They failed to realize that he was on twenty-four-hour call for prophecy. She meant him no harm at all and yet in spite of all this she was stricken with Tzaraas! This remains for as an all-time example that no one is above the law and we simple people have to be very careful not to cross the Loshon Horah line!

The question though remains. Why was Miriam stricken with Tzaraas? She was a first-time offender and in such a slight fashion. Again, the answer may be in the fact that she was so lofty in her spiritual stature that she is judged on a higher level. We find, our sages tell us that great people are held to a stricter standard. Also, the Shaarei Teshuvah writes that one should not look at the size of the sin but rather at the greatness of the one in front of Whom the sin was committed". In this case the verse states, "And HASHEM heard..." Nothing is slight!

There could be another important factor at play here as well. The Chofetz Chaim records in the name of the Chovos HaLevavos and other Holy Books that a person may be in for a surprise of the time for ultimate judgement in the Olam Haba - The World to Come! There all of our deeds, words, and thoughts are recorded and accounted for. WOAH! He says that a person may find merits that which he did not do and when he will inquire about where this came from, he will be told that it was the Mitzvos of someone that spoke against him. The Chovos HaLevavos goes on to explain that the person who spoke about others may be surprised to discover that unmeritorious deeds have been credited to him and when he will inquire about where they come from he will

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find out that they were given to him from the person that he spoke badly about. So too he will find out that his Mitzvos have been credited to the person he spoke about. This is beyond frightening! It's enough to make anyone who remains aware extra cautious about how and about whom he speaks.

The Chovos HaLevavos adds a little caveat. He says that this is hinted to in the Mitzvah of remembering what happened to Miriam when she spoke against her brother Moshe and was stricken with Tzaraas. Why does the Chovos HaLevavos use this as the address of warning? Are there not 37 other verses warning of the potential violations for the speaking Loshon Hora?

It could be that most cases when a Loshon erupts between people there is a volley of subtle and overt insults that are exchanged. People who are hurt may harbor hatred and open to taking revenge and may hurl a spontaneous insult back at the one he feels hurt him. As the words and bad feeling flow back and forth so do the merits and the demerits. People are made spiritual rich and poor from moment to moment. It may take a while for one person to become spiritually bankrupt and manifest Tzaraas. In this case the verse again testifies, "Now Moshe was the exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth." His response was zero. Miriam's account was immediately emptied out. Her extreme spiritual poverty was suddenly signaled by Tzaraas. It was a favor for her! With Teshuvah she can hope to regain what was lost and more.

Easy!

HASHEM spoke to Moshe saying: Make yourself two silver trumpets; you shall make them (MIKSHAH) [from a] beaten [form]; they shall be used by you to summon the congregation and to announce the departure of the camps. When they blow on them, the entire congregation shall assemble to you, at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. If they blow one of them, the princes, the leaders of Israel's thousands, shall convene to you. Bamidbar 10:1-4)

Why is that these two silver trumpets needed to be constructed in such an unusual manner? They were required by Divine specification to be beaten out of one piece of silver rather than to be assembled from component parts. That process is called MIKSHAH - beaten. Does that help the trumpets make a better sound? Is it easier to do it that way? The answer to both is "NO!" SO the question remains, "WHY?"

Actually two other vessels in the Torah have the exact same requirement. One of them is the golden Keruvim- Child Like Cherubin that rested atop the holy ark - the Aron in the Holy of Holies. The other one is the Golden Menorah that was lit daily by the Kohain. Each of these required MIKSHA to be beaten from a solid mass of gold and not a fitting together of

component parts. What's the message here? What is the Torah teaching us?

The word MIKSHA as employed here means to hammer or beat but the same word has another implication. In Talmudic language a KASHA is a something more than just question. It's a clash of concepts, a difficulty. Having to make something out of one mass of metal is much harder than joining together smaller parts. These three instruments or vessels for some reason have an inherent, "a built-in" requirement of difficulty in their construction.

They represent three areas of life that are guaranteed not to be free from difficulty. The Menorah is the symbol of Torah. Torah requires effort. The Talmud says explicitly that enlightenment is not automatic. "If some tells you they struggled and achieved (in Torah) believe them!" If someone tells you they didn't exert effort and they achieved in Torah don't believe them!" Those who accomplish in learning do so with great desire and much toil, not with intellect and a moderate interest.

The Cherubim have the appearance of young children. This may be already too obvious and apparent (all puns intended) to all. Raising children ain't easy. They don't come into this world with a specific instruction manual. There is no singular formula. There are principles but they require wisdom and patience too. King Solomon said, "Raise the child according to his way and so when he becomes old he will not depart from it." Each child has his own way! Then there is sibling rivalry, environmental factors, and free will at play. Oy Vey! Years back I shared my pain with a great man, sighing aloud, "Tzar Gidol Banim!" – The pain of raising children! He said to me "This is not even Tzar Gidol Banim – It's just plain "Gidol Banim raising children!"

The trumpets served the function of calling the Jewish People to action depending upon the sound that was signaled. This is the arena of Jewish Leadership. It's never easy. The apocryphal story is told that Chaim Weitzman, the first president of the new state of Israel was complaining to Harry Truman, "Oy have I got problems!" Harry Truman asked, "What kind of problems can you have, I'm the president of 200 million people!" To which Chaim Weitzman retorted, "But I'm the president of 3 million presidents!" Mordechai the Tzadik, the protagonist of the Purim story who saved the entire Jewish Nation from annihilation is described at the end of the Megilla, "Mordecai the Jew was viceroy to King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews and accepted by most of his brethren, seeking the good of his people..." Rashi is quick to remind us there that he was accepted by MOST but NOT ALL. It seems he had a mere 51% approval rating, after having saved everyone. As George Bernard Shaw cynically stated, "No good deed will go unpunished." Even Moshe faced open opposition.

So what's the point of knowing that these things are hard? The Mesilas Yesharim explains that one of giant impediments that holds a person from doing his business enthusiastically is the expectation that it should be easy. If someone expects something to be easy it becomes very hard. Paradoxically, the Ramchal explains, that once a person understands well and accepts that it's hard, then it becomes easy!

Yeshivat Har Etzion: Virtual Bet Midrash

The Section of "Va-Yehi Bi-Neso'a Ha-Aron" – Harav Yaakov Medan

And it came to pass, when the ark set forward ["Va-yehi bi-neso'a ha-aron"], that Moshe said: "Rise up, O Lord, and let Your enemies be scattered; and let them that hate You flee before You." And when it rested, he said: "Return, O Lord, to the ten thousands of the families of Israel." (Bamidbar 10:35-37)

This section has two unusual markers the likes of which are found nowhere else in the Torah – an inverted nun before it and an inverted nun after it. These markers are found also in Tehillim 107 where they separate between the verses of "the song of the sea," the song of thanksgiving sung to God by seafarers for the miracles that He performed to rescue them.

The Talmud discusses the nature of the markers found in our parasha, citing two opinions on the matter: Our Rabbis taught: "And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moshe said" – For this section the Holy One, blessed be He, provided signs above and below, to teach that this is not its place. Rabbi [Yehuda Ha-Nasi] said: It is not on that account, but because it ranks as a separate book. With whom does the following dictum of R. Shmuel bar Nachmani in the name of R. Yonatan agree: "She [Wisdom] has hewn out her seven pillars" (Mishlei 9:1) – this refers to the seven books of the Torah. With whom? With Rabbi [Yehuda Ha-Nasi]. Who is the Tanna who disagrees with Rabbi [Yehuda Ha-Nasi]? It is R. Shimon ben Gamaliel. For it was taught: R. Shimon ben Gamaliel said: This section is destined to be removed from here and written in its [right place]. And why is it written here? In order to provide a break between the first [account of] punishment and the second [account of] punishment. What is the second [account of] punishment? "And the people were as murmurers" (Bamidbar 11:1). What is the first [account of] punishment? "And they set forward from the mount of the Lord" (Bamidbar 10:33)... And where is its [rightful] place? In [the chapter on] the banners... If a Torah scroll is decayed, if eighty-five letters can be gathered therein, such as the section, "and it came to pass, when the ark set forward," we must save it; if not, we may not save it. (Shabbat 115b-116a)

I. A Separate Book (The Opinion of R. Yehuda Ha-Nasi) - According to R. Yehuda Ha-Nasi, the two markers set apart the verses under discussion as a separate book of the Torah, like Bereishit and Shemot – a book of two verses that contain eighty-five letters in

Likutei Divrei Torah

total. Based on this opinion, the gemara maintains that a Torah scroll that was decayed may be saved from fire, even on Shabbat, if there are eighty-five letters belonging to words that are still complete, like this small book, the section of "Va-yehi bi-neso'a ha-aron."

The gemara understands that according to this opinion, the Torah consists not of five, but of seven books. But what is the nature of such a small book among the other books of the Torah? It is possible that these two verses allude to "the book of the Wars of the Lord": Therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the Lord: Vahev in Sufa, and the valleys of Arnon. (Bamidbar 21:14)

This book contained a description of the wars of God that the people of Israel waged against their enemies. This book has not come down to us, and only a few of its verses were included as the word of God in the Torah. Among the verses that entered the Torah are the aforementioned verses describing the war in the valleys of Arnon. It is possible that the first verse of the book, as well as the last verse, were also included in the Torah. The first verse is likely to have been: "And it came to pass, when the ark set forward that Moshe said: Rise up, O Lord, and let Your enemies be scattered; and let them that hate You flee before You," Moshe's prayer before the army of Israel went out to fight the wars of God. The last verse is likely to have been: "And when it rested, he said: Return, O Lord, to the ten thousands of the families of Israel," Moshe's prayer at the time of the return of the army of Israel from the wars of God. The "abridged" version of the book of the Wars of the Lord could very well have been the book that was added to the five books of the Torah, and, accordingly, it is marked by inverted nuns at its beginning and at its end.

It is also possible that these verses constitute a "war song," for many wars in Scripture have songs associated with them. This war song parallels the "song of the sea" of those who go down to the sea in ships in Tehillim, each verse of which is preceded by an inverted nun: [They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters –] these saw the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep;] For He commanded, and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves thereof;] They mounted up to the heaven, they went down to the deeps; their soul melted away because of trouble;] They reeled to and fro, and staggered like a drunken man, and all their wisdom was swallowed up;] They cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He brought them out of their distresses. (Tehillim 107:23-28)

Our proposal that the two verses of "Va-yehi bi-neso'a ha-aron" are a prayer during God's wars is based on the content of the verses: "And let Your enemies be scattered and let them that hate You flee before You," on the fact that the ark sets forward when these verses are recited, and that it goes out with the people of Israel to war, as we see in the following examples: And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said: "Why

has the Lord smitten us today before the Pelishtim? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shilo to us, that He may come among us, and save us out of the hand of our enemies." (I Shmuel 4:3)

Moreover, these verses appear in a slightly different form in David's song of war: Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; and let those that hate Him flee before Him... O God, when You went forth before Your people, when You did march through the wilderness; Selah. The earth trembled, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God; even Sinai trembled at the presence of God, the God of Israel... The chariots of God are myriads, even thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in holiness. (Tehillim 68:2-18)

The psalm begins with "Let God arise; let His enemies be scattered," just like Moshe's prayer in our chapter, and it describes a war like the war of Devora and Barak that is described in the song of Devora. It continues by noting that the chariots of God are "myriads, even thousands upon thousands," like the "ten thousands of the families in Israel" in Moshe's prayer.

II. A Break between the Punishments (The Opinion of R. Shimon Ben Gamliel) - We will now discuss the opinion of R. Shimon ben Gamliel – that the section of "Va-yehi bi-neso'a ha-aron" was written here in order to provide a break between the first punishment and the second punishment. According to the gemara, this means between the punishment for "And they set forward from the mount of the Lord," which was recorded before the section of "Va-yehi bi-neso'a ha-aron," and the punishment of the murmurers, which was recorded after it. This exposition requires explanation, for what punishment is there for setting forth from the mount of the Lord toward Eretz Yisrael? And why was it necessary to uproot a section from its natural place – "Then the tent of meeting, with the camp of the Levites, shall set forward in the midst of the camps; as they encamp, so shall they set forward, every man in his place, by their standards" (Bamidbar 2:17) – and set it between the punishments? After all, in many places two calamities with their punishments are recorded one after the other (the murmurers and the lusters, the spies and the ma'apilim, Datan and Aviram and the two hundred and fifty burners of incense, and others).

And they set forward from the mount of the Lord three days' journey; and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting-place for them. (Bamidbar 10:33)

It seems that the Torah wishes to emphasize the space that surrounded the camp of Israel before it and behind it. The mount of the Lord was at a distance of a three day journey behind the camp, and the ark of the covenant of the Lord was at a distance of a three day journey before it. The distance from the two centers of the covenant and the Torah was exceedingly great!

This is reflected in the request made first by the mixed multitude (the asafsuf), and

afterwards by all of Israel, to receive meat. The people of Israel do, indeed, receive meat, but in a wrathful manner:

And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought across quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, about a day's journey on this side, and a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and about two cubits above the face of the earth. (Bamidbar 11:31)

The empty space between the Israelite camp and the Torah, Mount Sinai and the ark, is filling up. It fills up with meat. The very abundance of meat is negative and dangerous. When the abundance of meat takes the place of the Torah and of the covenant with God, it is many times more dangerous.

This reminds us of the problem raised in the book of Devarim: When the Lord your God shall enlarge your border, as He has promised you, and you shall say, "I will eat flesh," because your soul desires to eat flesh; you may eat flesh, after all the desire of your soul. If the place which the Lord your God shall choose to put His name there be too far from you.... (Devarim 12:20-21)

The chassidic reading of these verses accounts for the lust for eating meat, which is so emphasized in these verses, as following from the fact that the Shekhina is at such a distance. A person who is close to the Shekhina does not indulge in eating meat. The verses in our parasha mention lust and meat on multiple occasions. Here too it is because "the place is too far from you." The mount of the Lord is a three-day journey behind them, and the ark of the covenant of the Lord is a three-day journey ahead of them. This was a calamity that required temperance. The song of "Va-yehi bi-neso'a" separates between their separation from God's Torah by way of a three-day journey from the mount of the Lord and from the ark of the Lord, before the section of "Va-yehi bi-neso'a," and their clinging to meat on all sides of the camp, one-day's journey in this direction and one-day's journey in the other direction, after the section of "Va-yehi bi-neso'a." (Translated by David Strauss)

Weekly Parsha BEHALOTCHA 5781

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

We are familiar with the Rashi's comment in the second verse of this week's Torah reading that the Priest who lit the candelabra was to keep the fire close to the wick, until the wick itself caught fire and rose by itself. This is a lesson not only regarding the lighting of the great candelabra in the Temple but is also a metaphor for many life situations. Unless the wick itself truly catches fire and holds the flame on its own, the effort expended in attempting to light this wick will ultimately be fruitless and unsuccessful.

This metaphor is true in family life as well, for if our children and grandchildren are unable to be successful on their own, then the parents have somehow failed their responsibility regarding their children. This is also true in the realm of education. Students who can never be productive on their own, no matter how much knowledge they have, will not be a source of pride to their teachers.

We have witnessed many times in life that people who were somehow voted to be the most likely from their class to be successful in the future, do not fulfill that hope and expectation. Their flame did not kindle itself and is of limited illumination and value. There are many factors that go into this eternal problem of generations of students. However, the result is what usually counts, and everyone agrees that success is measured by the ability to eventually achieve by one's own efforts.

This week's Torah reading itself provides an example of this idea, of making certain that the flame will take hold on its own and not flicker and later disappear. We are taught that the Jewish people undertook what should have been a short march from the mountain of Sinai to enter the land of Israel. They are seemingly well mobilized for the journey and embark upon it with apparent enthusiasm. Nevertheless, this journey turns into a trek of 38 years of bitterness, hostility, rebellion, and eventual demise of that entire generation. Simply put, the flame that was with the Jewish people at the Exodus from Egypt and the revelation at Mount Sinai did not hold fast enough to be able to survive the tests and vicissitudes of life and the events that lay ahead.

It would be the task of the later generations to summon the will and tenacity necessary to see to it that the tools necessary for the national growth and development of the Jewish people in the land of Israel would be strong enough to maintain itself on its own. That remains the challenge in Jewish life throughout the long centuries of our existence, and especially over the tumultuous centuries that we have recently experienced. Tenacity of purpose and strength of will have been and remain the key weapons in our arsenal of survival and triumph, and we will see the flame of Israel strengthen and rise once again in our days.

Shabbat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

Power or Influence? (Beha'alotecha 5781)

Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Rabbi Sacks zt"l had prepared a full year of Covenant & Conversation for 5781, based on his book Lessons in Leadership. The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust will continue to distribute these weekly essays, so that people all around the world can keep on learning and finding inspiration in his Torah.

There is a lovely moment in this week's parsha that shows Moses at the height of his generosity as a leader. It comes after one of his deepest moments of despair. The people, as is their wont, have been complaining, this time about the food. They are tired of the manna. They want meat instead. Moses, appalled that they have not yet learned to accept the hardships of freedom, prays to die. "If this is how You are going to treat me," he says to God, "please go ahead and kill me right now – if I have found favour in Your eyes – and do not let me face my own ruin." (Num. 11:15)

God tells him to appoint seventy elders to help him with the burdens of leadership. He does so, and the Divine Spirit rests on them all. But it also rests on two other men, Eldad and Medad, who were not among the chosen seventy. Evidently Moses had selected six men out of each of the twelve tribes, making 72, and then removed Eldad and Medad by lot. Nonetheless, they too were caught up in the moment of inspiration.[1]

Joshua, Moses' deputy, warns that this is a potential threat, but Moses replies with splendid magnanimity: "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people were Prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon each of them!" (Num. 11:29)

This contrasts sharply with Moses' conduct later when his leadership is challenged by Korach and his followers. On that occasion he showed no gentleness or generosity. To the contrary, in effect he prays that the ground swallow them up, that "they go down alive into the realm of the dead." (Num. 16:28-30) He is sharp, decisive and unforgiving. Why the different response to Korach on the one hand, and Eldad and Medad on the other?

To understand this, it is essential to grasp the difference between two concepts often confused, namely power and influence. We tend to think of them as similar if not identical. People of power have influence. People of influence have power. But the two are quite distinct and operate by a different logic, as a simple thought experiment will show.

Imagine you have total power. Whatever you say, goes. Then one day you decide to share your power with nine others. You now have, at best, one-tenth of the power you had before. Now imagine instead that you have a certain measure of influence. You decide to share that influence with nine others, whom you make your partners. You now have ten times the influence you had before, because instead of just you there are now ten people delivering the message.

Power works by division, influence by multiplication. Power, in other words, is a zero-sum game: the more you share, the less you have. Influence is not like this, as we see with our Prophets. When it comes to leadership-as-influence, the more we share the more we have.

Throughout his forty years at the head of the nation, Moses held two different leadership roles. He was a Prophet, teaching Torah to the Israelites and communicating with God. He was also the functional equivalent of a king, leading the people on their journeys, directing their destiny and supplying them with their needs. The one leadership role he did not have was that of High Priest, which went to his brother Aaron.

We can see this duality later in the narrative when he inducts Joshua as his successor. God commands him: "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man of spirit, and lay your hand on him ... Give him some of your honour (hod) so that the whole Israelite community will obey him. (Num. 27:18-20)

Note the two different acts. One, "lay your hand [vesamachta] on him," is the origin of term s'michah, whereby a Rabbi ordains a pupil, granting him the authority to make rulings in his own right. The Rabbis saw their role as a continuation of that of the Prophets ("Moses received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the Prophets; and the Prophets handed it down to the men of the Great Assembly," Mishnah Avot 1:1). By this act of s'michah, Moses was handing on to Joshua his role as Prophet.

By the other act, "Give him some of your honour," he was inducting him into the role of King. The Hebrew word hod, honour, is associated with kingship, as in the biblical phrase hod malchut, "the honour of kingship" (Dan. 11:21; 1 Chronicles, 29:25).

Kings had power – including that of life and death (see Joshua 1:18). Prophets had none, but they had influence, not just during their lifetimes but, in many cases, to this day. To paraphrase Kierkegaard: when a King dies his power ends. When a Prophet dies his influence begins.

Now we see exactly why Moses' reaction was so different in the case of Eldad and Medad, and that of Korach and his followers. Eldad and Medad sought and received no power. They merely received the same influence – the Divine Spirit that emanated from Moses. They became

Prophets. That is why Moses said, “I wish that all the Lord’s people were Prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit on them.”

Korach, or at least some of his followers, sought power, and power is a zero-sum game. When it comes to malchut, the leadership of power, the rule is: “There is one leader for the generation, not two.”[2] In kingship, a bid for power is an attempted coup d’etat and has to be resisted by force. Otherwise the result is a division of the nation into two, as happened after the death of King Solomon. Moses could not let the challenge of Korach go unchallenged without fatefully compromising his own authority.

So Judaism clearly demarcates between leadership as influence and leadership by power. It is unqualified in its endorsement of the first, and deeply ambivalent about the second. Tanach is a sustained polemic against the use of power. All power, according to the Torah, rightly belongs to God. The Torah recognises the need, in an imperfect world, for the use of coercive force in maintaining the rule of law and the defence of the realm. Hence its endorsement of the appointment of a King, should the people so desire it.[3] But this is clearly a concession, not an ideal.[4]

The real leadership embraced by Tanach and by rabbinic Judaism is that of influence, above all that of Prophets and teachers. As we have noted many times before, that is the ultimate accolade given to Moses by tradition. We know him as Moshe Rabbeinu, Moses our teacher. Moses was the first of a long line of figures in Jewish history – among them Ezra, Hillel, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai, Rabbi Akiva, the Sages of the Talmud and the scholars of the Middle Ages – who represent one of Judaism’s most revolutionary ideas: the teacher as hero.

Judaism was the first and greatest civilisation to predicate its very survival on education, houses of study, and learning as a religious experience higher even than prayer.[5] The reason is this: leaders are people able to mobilise others to act in certain ways. If they achieve this only because they hold power over them, this means treating people as means, not ends – as things not persons. Not accidentally, the single greatest writer on leadership as power was Machiavelli.

The other approach is to speak to people’s needs and aspirations, and teach them how to achieve these things together as a group. That is done through the power of a vision, force of personality, the ability to articulate shared ideals in a language with which people can identify, and the capacity to “raise up many disciples” who will continue the work into the future. Power diminishes those on whom it is exercised. Influence and education lift and enlarge them.

Judaism is a sustained protest against what Hobbes called the “general inclination of all mankind,” nameless “a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death.”[6] That may be the reason why Jews have seldom exercised power for prolonged periods of time but have had an influence on the world out of all proportion to their numbers.

Not all of us have power, but we all have influence. That is why we can each be leaders. The most important forms of leadership come not with position, title or robes of office, not with prestige and power, but with the willingness to work with others to achieve what we cannot do alone; to speak, to listen, to teach, to learn, to treat other people’s views with respect even if they disagree with us, to explain patiently and cogently why we believe what we believe and why we do what we do; to encourage others, praise their best endeavours and challenge them to do better still.

Always choose influence rather than power. It helps change people into people who can change the world.

Insights Parshas Beha'aloscha - Sivan 5781

Yeshiva Beis Moshe Chaim/Talmudic University

Based on the Torah of our

Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

This week’s Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Sora bas Avraham. “May her Neshama have an Aliya!”

When a Symptom Becomes a Cause

And the people became as complainers, (speaking) evil in the ears of Hashem... (11, 1)

Rashi (ad loc) explains that the word “misoninim” means those who seek a pretext to complain; Bnei Yisroel were looking for a way to distance themselves from Hashem. Rashi goes on to explain that they were complaining about their arduous journey – “we have traveled three days without a respite!” Yet, previously (10, 33) Rashi explained that they completed a three day journey in a single day because Hashem wanted to bring them into Eretz Yisroel immediately. If so, why were they complaining?

Chazal (cited by Ramban on 10, 35) teach us that Bnei Yisroel left Mount Sinai like “a child running away from school.” Chazal are referring to the feeling of relief following the removal of responsibility that a school child feels when he hears that final school bell on the last day of the school year. He doesn’t simply leave, he literally “runs away” from school. In other words, Bnei Yisroel were running away from Hashem and the mitzvos. As Ramban (ibid.) explains; they ran away “lest we receive more commandments.”

Most fights that people engage in – especially when it comes to family issues – have little or nothing to do with the actual reason for the fight. Nearly all interpersonal issues stem from control issues. Couples may fight over religious observance, their spouse’s family, their children’s education, or other seemingly “righteous” arguments. But in reality they are merely looking for a pretext to express their displeasure with the other person. The argument is merely the vehicle to articulate feelings of resentment.

The quintessential example of this is Korach. He made many religious and seemingly righteous arguments against Moshe and Aharon. Korach was a first rate talmid chacham and was able to channel his resentment into halachic disagreements with Moshe and Aharon. In fact, he was able to convince many people to side with him. But, in reality, he was just jealous that he was overlooked for the position of Kohen Gadol. His arguments were merely a pretext to pick a fight; which is why the Mishna in avos calls it a machlokes that was not for the sake of heaven.

This further explains what Rashi means by “they were looking to distance themselves from Hashem.” Their real issue had nothing to do with the journey; for we know that a three day journey only took one day. This of course was a great kindness from the Almighty, but as they were looking for a pretext to throw off the yoke of responsibility to Hashem, they used the three day journey as an excuse for a fight. The complaining wasn’t because of a justifiable cause, it was only a symptom of the real issue – their resentment at being told what to do.

Dealing with Abuse

Did I conceive this entire nation, did I give birth to it that You say to me carry them in your bosom like a nurse carries an infant... (11, 12)

Moshe describes his responsibility of leadership as a parent who cares for an infant. Rashi (ad loc) points out that Hashem outlined the extent of this responsibility when he first appointed Moshe: “And He commanded them (Moshe and Aharon) regarding Bnei Yisroel” (Shemos 6, 13): “Lead them with the understanding that they will stone you and insult you.”

On the face of it, this seems kind of shocking. What kind of leader tolerates physical and psychological punishment? Perhaps even more perplexing – how does Moshe relate this responsibility to that of parenting an infant?

The Torah is teaching us an incredible lesson in both parenting and leadership. Every child “knows” that they were born because of their parents’ self-interest, and upon superficial examination they would seem to be right. A case can certainly be made that having children is for our own self-interest: Whether it’s to work in the family business or continue the family legacy or simply to escape mortality by having descendants who will be here long after we’re gone, it’s seemingly clear that having children is really in our own selfish interests.

In leadership it is even more glaringly clear, particularly when looking at today’s political landscape.

Obviously, as parents we hope that bringing children into this world isn’t primarily driven by our own selfish needs. We strive to be giving,

altruistic, and love unconditionally. On the other hand, we must keep in mind that our children will always look for reasons why we do what we do. Essentially, if they can explain that much of what we do is in our self-interest then they can rationalize that they don't owe us much as we aren't doing anything for their sake. This is a common mindset for one who is on the receiving side of kindness. Being on the receiving end of a largesse is discomfiting; therefore the natural response is to search for a motive behind the gift. Rationalizing that not much is owed in terms of appreciation because the kindness was really self-serving in some manner for the benefactor is how most people deal with this discomfort. Unfortunately, we all make the mistake of criticizing our children in areas where it becomes confusing as to if we are criticizing for the child's own good or merely because we are concerned for our own reputation. This can be criticism of how a child does in school, how he dresses, what profession he chooses, or even the spouse he chooses to marry. Are we being critical because we are trying to improve the child or because we are embarrassed by his actions, as if it is some failure on our part?

Obviously, as parents we want to believe that we are doing it for the right reasons. On the other hand, a child will naturally look at it as being due to our own ego and self-interest. This is why it is so important that we severely limit our criticism to issues that cannot be misconstrued as self-serving.

But even more importantly, the Torah is teaching us that being a good parent comes with the understanding that, as a parent, you're going to take abuse. In fact, that is the clearest way to send the message to your children that your parenting is for their sake not your own: If you're willing to put up with abuse, obviously the relationship is about what's good for them and not necessarily what's best for you.

This same lesson applies to leadership. Constituents are naturally going to look at everything their leaders do as being in their own self-serving interests. This is why Hashem commanded Moshe to take the position with the understanding that there will be physical and psychological abuse. Being tolerant of those abuses is the only way a leader can relay the message that he is acting in the interest of the constituency not his own self-interest.

Did You Know...

This week's parsha, Parshas Beha'aloscha, contains the unusual upside down appearance of the letter 'nun' twice as brackets to two seemingly random pesukim (Bamidbar 10:35-36). It is difficult to understand what is so unique about these two pesukim; they seem to carry no special message other than conveying what Moshe would say every time the aron started moving – with the entire nation behind it – and what he said every time the aron came to a rest.

The Gemara (Shabbos 115b-116a) has a machlokes regarding what this separated section means. One opinion is that this section is bracketed to indicate that it does not belong here. It should really have appeared in the parsha of Bamidbar or Nasso where the formations and the travels of the camp were discussed. The reason why it was placed here was to put separation between the "first account of punishment" and the "second account of punishment" (because the Torah didn't want to record in succession two sins of Bnei Yisroel that were deserving of severe punishment). Interestingly, Rashi adds that when Moshiach comes, and there aren't any more punishments from Hashem, this section will go back to its rightful place.

According to another opinion in the Gemara, these two pesukim are in their proper place because this is the first account of how the Jews traveled, as earlier it was only the commandment. So the separation of these pesukim indicates that these two verses are in reality a separate book in and of themselves. According to this view, there are not Five Books of Moshe, but Seven Books of Moshe: (1) Bereishis, (2) Shemos, (3) Vayikra, (4) Bamidbar until these two pesukim, (5) These Two Pesukim, (6) the rest of Bamidbar, and (7) Devarim.

As a side note – even if we acknowledge that this division creates two new books, how can two isolated verses be considered a "book" by any stretch of the imagination? We find a fascinating Mishna (Yadayim 3:5), which discusses the ritual sanctity of the Torah; it teaches that any part

of Torah which is erased but retains a minimum of 85 letters, (exactly the number in this separated section of this week's parsha), has holiness, for a "book" remains. This is discussed more in depth in Gemara Shabbos 116a.

Rabbeinu Bachya adds that the reason why the Torah chose reversed "nuns" is because the numerical value of the letter nun is fifty, and Bamibar 2:17, where these verses belong, is 50 sections before this section.

{It has been observed that even with counting both of these sections, they are in fact only 49 sections apart, but this may be attributed to an extra paragraph that the older Sifrei Torahs had (Minchas Shai Bamidbar 10:22).}

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For the week ending 29 May 2021 / 18 Sivan 5781

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Parshat Beha'aloscha

Two Drops of Rain

"He (Yitro) said to him (Moshe), 'I shall not go; only to my land and my family shall I go.' " (10:30)

I live a few hundred meters from a road called Levi Eshkol Boulevard. Ostensibly, there's nothing particularly interesting about this highway. There are many extremely similar roads in Jerusalem, but Levi Eshkol Boulevard marks a watershed. Quite literally.

Two drops of rain falling right next to each other on Levi Eshkol Boulevard. The one that falls to the east side of the road will make its way down through East Jerusalem, through the wadis of the Judean desert, and end up as a saline solution in the Dead Sea. And the one falling to the west will make its way down the slopes of the Judean Hills, ending up in the Mediterranean. Two drops of rain that begin their journey together, yet end up as far from each other as east from west.

I was talking on the phone with an old friend. He's probably the oldest friend I have. We were English schoolboys together some fifty years ago. To say the least, we went on to travel very different roads. He married twice. The first time was to a Jewish girl. It didn't work out. They divorced without children. Now he's married again. They have one child, a boy. His name is something like Sebastian.

One Shabbat, at the third meal, I was watching my grandsons sitting at the table (well, jumping all over the table really). My eldest grandson was 'saying over' words of Torah heard from his rebbe. Words that his rebbe had once heard from his own rebbe. Words that were thousands of years old and full of holiness.

And I thought of my friend and his son. I remembered our conversation. My friend told me that his son was very bright and ran rings around his (Christian) Bible teacher. "Sebastian" had asked his teacher, "Who created G-d?" This left the Bible teacher in a lather of half-muttered apologetics, such as, "You can't ask such questions" and "You don't understand". My friend was pleased that his son was showing no signs of incipient Christianity. In his eyes, he had bequeathed to him the 'casual atheism' that he was brought up to believe was Judaism. I said to him that I was surprised the Bible teacher had been stumped by such an easy question. "If someone had created G-d, then He wouldn't be G-d. By definition, G-d exists beyond creation. He created creation. Nothing can exist before Him or after Him. Time has no dominion over Him because He created time."

There was a slight pause on the line. For a moment, my friend wasn't quite sure whether I was preaching Christianity to him.

And here, at the Shabbat table, I was looking at my grandson speaking his little heart out with words of Torah, and I reflected about what it had 'cost' to get to this table. Breaking your teeth on a language taught you so poorly as a child that you would be better off not having learned it at all. Having to reply, "Ich nisht redt Yiddish," when someone mistakes you for an FFB. Having to explain to your daughters why their grandmothers don't wear sheitel s. Feeling that you will never quite fit

in — that there will always be ‘edges’ which will never be rubbed smooth.

Was it worth it? Of course, it was! How can you compare a Jewish life to any other? And that’s just in this world. And, yet, when I think back, my decision to re-embrace the faith of my ancestors was not based on some huge life changing event. Rather, one small commitment led to another, which led to another.

“He (Yitro) said to him (Moshe), ‘I shall not go; only to my land and my family shall I go.’”

Yitro eventually changed his mind and stayed with the Jewish People.

Sometimes one decision can change your whole life.

Like two drops of rain.

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Rabbi Buchwald's Weekly Torah Message - B'ha'a'lot'cha 5781-2021

“Is This What the Torah Predicted?”

(updated and revised from B'ha'a'lot'cha 5762-2002)

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

This week’s parasha, parashat B’ha’a’lot’cha, contains several interesting themes. Among them are: the lighting of the Menorah, the duties of the Levites, the bringing of the second Passover offering, and a description of how the Israelites traveled in the wilderness. In this parasha the Israelites depart from Sinai and journey to Moab, and encounter Hovav (Jethro), Moses’ father-in-law. Finally, after episodes of murmurings and rebellions, the 70 elders are selected, and Miriam is punished for speaking against her brother Moses. Quite a rich and colorful Torah portion!

Two particular stories contained in this week’s parasha are quite predictive of future Jewish history. Numbers 11 opens with the complaints of the מִתְאֲנִיִּים — the mitonanim, the murmurers. Immediately following, in Numbers 11:4, we learn of the אֲסַפְסֻף, the asafsuf, the mixed multitude who, according to tradition, were Egyptians who had joined with the Israelites and accompanied them out of Egypt.

The Torah tells us that the mixed multitude fell to lusting, and cried out, saying, Numbers 11:4-6: *מִי יַאֲכִלֵנוּ בָשָׂר?* “Who will give us flesh to eat?” *זָכְרֵנוּ אֶת הַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר נֹאכַל בַּמִּצְרַיִם הַהֵם, אֶת הַקִּשְׁאִים וְאֶת הָאֲבִטְחִים וְאֶת הַחֲצִיר וְאֶת הַבָּצְלִים וְאֶת הַשּׁוּמִים.* “We remember the fish which we ate in Egypt for nothing—the cucumbers, and melons, the leeks, the onions and the garlic,” *אֵין לָנוּ נֶפֶשׁ, אֵין לָנוּ נֶפֶשׁ, אֵין לָנוּ נֶפֶשׁ,* “But now, our soul is dried up, there is nothing at all!”

I feel strongly that the Torah is not only relating an historical incident that occurred over three thousand years ago, but is also predicting an attitudinal reality that reoccurs throughout Jewish history and even in our own times.

The Torah predicts that there is going to be a generation of Jews, of “dried-out” Jews, as we have today in America: Jews who will no longer identify as Jews, Jews who will be totally unaffiliated, Jews who will intermarry at astonishing rates (70% of the non-Orthodox). Non-Orthodox Jews, 85% of whom will attend synagogue no more than three days a year. The Torah predicts that there will be more than 625,000 Jews who will convert out of Judaism and worship other religions, and that one million Jewish children under the age of 18 will be raised as Christians or with no religion whatsoever. “But now, our souls are dry,” they say. “Our souls are parched, we have no connection to Judaism or to G-d. We feel no affinity to Shabbat or kashrut.” *אֵין לָנוּ אֵין לָנוּ אֵין לָנוּ* — “Ayn kol,” “we have absolutely no interest in Jewish life!”

But, thank G-d, there is another group of Jews, also mentioned in this week’s parasha, the לֵוִיִּם נִגְרָעִים Jews. In Numbers 9, we read that in the first month of the second year after the Exodus from Egypt, the people of Israel celebrated Passover. Numbers 9:6, informs us that, *וַיְהִי אֲנָשִׁים*, *וְהָיוּ אֲנָשִׁים לְנֶפֶשׁ אֶחָד, וְלֹא יָכֻלוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת הַפֶּסַח בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא*, there were some men who had come in contact with the dead, and were therefore ritually unclean, so they could not keep the Passover on that day. And, they came before Moses and before Aaron, and said (Numbers 9:7): *לָמָּה נִגְרָעֵנוּ?* “Why should we miss out

from bringing the [Passover] sacrifice of G-d in its proper time, together with the rest of Israel?”

According to the Talmud, Sukkah 25a, these men were members of the Chevrah Kadisha, the Jewish burial society, who had been preoccupied with carrying the bones of Joseph to be buried in the land of Israel or had buried the sons of Aaron, Nadav and Abihu, when they died suddenly for bringing a strange fire to the Tabernacle. Therefore, these men were in a state of ritual impurity and could not bring the Pascal sacrifice together with the rest of Israel. They cried out and said, “We love Pesach! We love Shabbat! We love kashrut! We love keeping the laws of family purity. We love being Jews! Why should we miss out? Why should we be unable to celebrate Passover with the rest of our people?”

But, the truth of the matter is, that given the blandishments of America, even those who are strongly committed, even those who keep Shabbat, and even those who are strictly kosher, are not safe. Our children are not safe, and we are not safe. We are subtly, and sometimes not so subtly, being corrupted by the challenging environment. And, even those who abide by the strictest standard of kashrut, are subject to these negative influences. Is there a child, even in the most sheltered environment of America, who is not corrupted by the violence and the wanton sexual themes that are the mainstay of American entertainment? We’ve all been corrupted, and we’re all being reduced as Jews and as human beings.

We need models, inspirational models, aside from those “famous and popular” Jews who the worlds of entertainment and business put forth, and who often fall short of the types of people we should emulate. We need לֵוִיִּם נִגְרָעִים Jews, Jews who not only love Judaism for themselves, and declare, “Why should we lose out?” but, who care for others as well, and proclaim, “Why should they lose out?” “We love Shabbat, we love kosher, we love learning Torah so much, that we want to make certain that there isn’t a Jew in the world who has not been exposed to Judaism’s beautiful and revolutionary ideas and traditions.

We need Jews who feel the passion of their Judaism so totally, that they will not rest as long as they know that there are other Jews who are deprived of the great treasures of their Jewish heritage. We need Jews who feel that their own Shabbat is not complete, unless their next-door neighbor’s Shabbat is complete. We need Jews who are prepared to serve as ambassadors, to engage the millions of Jews who are ignorant of their magnificent Jewish heritage, and who desperately want to be part of the Jewish life, but don’t know where to begin.

We, perhaps, are now facing the greatest challenge of contemporary times. We cannot deny the losses. Our actions, or lack of action, will determine whether there will be a viable Jewish community in the future. We can bring the “vanishing” Jews back, but we must mobilize our community.

The generation of the Holocaust was able to say, “We did not know!” What are we going to say, “We did not care!”? The Talmud (Sanhedrin 37a) declares, that those who save a single life in Israel are considered as if they have saved an entire world. We have an opportunity today to save tens of thousands of Jewish lives, but instead of sending out the luxury liner, we have been sending out row boats. We need to mobilize. We need to extend our hands and welcome our brothers and sisters aboard.

If the souls of our fellow Jews are dry, then we have only ourselves to blame. But, if we reach out and embrace them, we will prevail. And, as a result, with G-d’s help, we will usher in a bright, beautiful and productive Jewish future.

May you be blessed.

Drasha - No One Likes to Be Left Out

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya

You’ve gone a long way...Aaron! No one likes to be left out. Imagine that you were a governor of a small but very idealistic province. You had been a founding member of the republic. You stood by the leadership in times of crises and supported it on every issue. And now you sit together with the governors of the other twelve colonies as they present an inaugural gift for the dedication of the Capitol building. Each

governor is called up and presents a gift as a cherished memento. You, or a representative of your province, are not called. How would you feel?

At the dedication of the Tabernacle each tribe sent its Nasi, (prince) to bring an initial offering. Aaron the leader of the tribe of Levi, that represented the clergy of Israel, who stood up to the idol worshippers during the sin of the Golden Calf, was not asked to present an offering. Aaron was quite upset and G-d knew it. Last week's portion ended by enumerating the sacrifices that every other Nasi brought in honor of the inaugural event. This week we begin the reading with G-d's pacification of Aaron. The portion begins as G-d tells Aaron, "when you will light the candles." Rashi quotes the Sages: "When Aaron saw the gifts of all the other princes and realized that neither he, nor his tribe of Levi, were included to present a gift, he was upset. G-d told him, 'do not fret. Your lot is greater than theirs is. You will arrange and kindle the Menorah.'"

Nachmanides is taken aback at this form of appeasement. Why, he asks, is lighting the Menorah a greater act than those of the princes of the other tribes. Second there are greater and holier services that could have been, and are, given to Aaron — the incense for example. What's so special about lighting the Menorah?

Nachmanides explains the words of the Sages: It is an allusion to the Menorah that will be rekindled by the Hasmoneans in conjunction with the miracle of Chanukah. "Your children," Aaron is told, "will light a special Menorah thousands of years in the future." That is how Aaron was appeased.

I am troubled. How do you appease someone's lack of participation by assuring him that one day, his great-great-great grandchildren will initiate something very special?

The answer lies in the essence of our eternity. People may do what seem to be monumental actions, but in truth they are fleeting. They may begin with a boom but they end in a puff of smoke that dissipates with the gentle breezes of time. Then there are seemingly minor acts, simple ones that have eternal impact. Those are the greatest gifts.

Rabbi Shlomo Hyman, the first dean of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath, had a most amazing way of teaching his students. Unlike the dry lectures given by many brilliant scholars, he would shout with almost breathless rapture as he explained the Talmud and its commentaries. His eyes would sparkle and his arms would wave as he orchestrated Talmudic theory. After the class he would almost collapse from the exhaustion.

One particular snowy day back in the early 1940's only four boys came to class. Nevertheless, Rabbi Hyman delivered his dissertation as if the room was packed with hundreds of students. Beads of sweat rolled down his face as he argued points of law to the disbelieving four boys. As he paused to catch his breath, one of the boys mustered his courage and beseeched the Torah Giant. "Rebbe, please — there are only four of us." Rabbi Hyman's eyes widened. "You think I'm giving this class for four boys? I am giving this class to hundreds of boys. I'm giving this class to you, your students, their students, and their students!

Aaron's contribution wasn't only the lighting of the Menorah in the Tabernacle. It was the inspiration his children and grandchildren received for eternity. His actions inspired the lighting of the Menorah as the Temple was rededicated during the days of the Hasmoneans. It sparked the secret lighting of the Menorah in caves during the Zoroastrian era. It propelled the lighting of Menorahs carved from rotten potatoes on eight freezing December nights deep in the bunkers of the Warsaw ghetto. It aroused the love for the lighting of the Menorah by Jews across the globe, whose only attachment to Judaism is the memory of eight colored candles glowing brightly in their parent's homes. The gift that Aaron brought to the inauguration didn't dissipate into historical oblivion like the gifts of the twelve princes. It lasted for eternity. Remember; not everything we do for Judaism can be monumental. But when our actions have eternal ramifications, they are the greatest gifts of all.

*Dedicated by Mr. And Mrs. Leonard Thun
Good Shabbos*

Rabbi Shlomo Hyman, 1893-1944 was a Rosh Yeshiva in Vilna before becoming dean of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath in 1936.

Story Adapted from In the Footsteps of the Magid by Rabbi Paysach Krohn, published by Mesorah Publications, (c) 1992.

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Behaaloscha

The Seventy Elders Come Well Prepared for Their Job

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya

Parshas BeHa'alosecha contains the creation of the first Sanhedrin. This august institution originated in our parsha. It came from the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu complained that the burden of leading and taking care of the people was overwhelming. In response, the Ribono shel Olam said "I am going to give you the Sanhedrin." Moshe was told "Gather for Me seventy men from the elders of Israel whom you know to be the elders of the people and its officers..." [Bamidbar 11:16]. This group would become a functioning leadership body within the Jewish nation.

Rashi comments on the words "whom you know": "Those of whom you are aware that had been appointed as guards over [the Israelites] in Egypt at the 'crushing labor'. They would take pity on them and be beaten by the Egyptians because of them..."

In Egypt there existed a class of Egyptian taskmasters who made sure that the work was carried out. However, the Egyptian taskmasters did not deal with the slaves directly. They appointed what they called Jewish policemen. It was the job of the Jewish policemen to rouse the people from their beds, to get them to their work, and to make sure that the required quota of bricks was made. These policemen were the people who eventually became the members of Moshe's Sanhedrin.

These policemen were not just your average policemen. They were tzadikim, because when the Jewish slaves did not meet the set quota of brick-making, and someone had to pay the physical price for their lack of output, it was these Shotrim who were literally whipped by the Egyptian taskmasters, rather than the people they were assigned to supervise. They were not, chas v'Shalom, in cahoots with the Egyptian taskmasters. They had mercy on their brethren and personally suffered the pain when the brick quota of the slaves fell short of Pharaoh's demands.

Parshas BeHa'aloscha is "payback time" for these Shotrim. This is when HaKadosh Baruch Hu pays back these tzadikim for the abuse they suffered at the hands of the Egyptians in order to spare their fellow Jews from suffering a similar fate or worse.

I saw an interesting observation. These people became the members of the Sanhedrin. Now, were they tzadikim? Yes. They were great tzadikim. They were especially beloved in G-d's Eyes. Indeed, Chazal note that the words "Gather to Me" is one of only thirteen places where Hashem uses the expression "to Me", indicating the special beloved status of these individuals.

However, let us ask a question: Being a "nice guy" does not qualify someone for sitting on the Sanhedrin! L'Havdil (a thousand times over), when they pick a member to sit on the Supreme Court of the United States, it is not enough of a recommendation to say, "This fellow is a very nice guy. He was my college roommate." This is not a political appointee. When appointing, for example, an Ambassador to France, it is quite common to give the assignment to someone who contributed a lot of money to the Presidential election campaign. However, a judge must know what he is talking about! Today, every person who is a Supreme Court Justice is at the top of his or her field. L'Havdil!

This is the Sanhedrin. The Rambam writes (Chapter 2 of Hilchos Sanhedrin) that we only appoint to be a member of the Sanhedrin people who are "Chachomim u'Nevonim, Muflagim b'Chochmas haTorah, ba'alei Deah meRubah..." (wise and extremely perceptive individuals, exceptional in their wisdom regarding the laws of Torah, masters of broad and extensive knowledge. The list of Rambam's intellectual requirements continues to include mathematics, astronomy, and science.) In short a Judge on the Sanhedrin has to know virtually everything!

Granted, these people on Moshe's Sanhedrin were tzadikim, great people. They were moser nefesh to spare their fellow Jews from being

beaten up in Egypt. But how do they qualify to sit on the Sanhedrin? They don't know enough Torah!

I saw in the name of Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro that we see from here that a person who suffers along with the burden of his fellow man (no'say b'ol im chaveiro), who sticks his neck out for another Jew and empathizes with him, who suffers for another Jew—he is automatically gifted with knowledge that he never knew on his own. That is what happened to the seventy people in Moshe's Sanhedrin. Overnight, they were transformed into Gedolei Torah, Gedolei Yisroel. How? It was a Heavenly reward because they got beaten by the Egyptians. When you are willing to suffer for another Jew, the Ribono shel Olam treats you differently. You can be a simple Jew one day, and maybe know "Chumash and Rashi", and the next day you know the entire Torah... because you helped out another Jew.

The Tolner Rebbe notes several interesting inferences Rashi makes here: On the words "And you shall take them" (v'Lakachta osam) [Bamidbar 11:16], Rashi remarks: "Take them with words. (Cajole them, convince them.) Happy are you for having been appointed Providers for the Children of the Omnipresent." (You are so lucky that you have become leaders of the Ribono shel Olam's children – what a wonderful job!)

Truth be told, Rashi uses a similar expression earlier in this parsha on the pasuk "Take the Leviim from the midst of the Children of Israel." [Bamidbar 8:6] Rashi there explains the expression in an almost identical fashion: "Take them with words. Happy are you that you merited to be ministers before the Omnipresent." The Leviim do the Service in the Beis HaMikdash. Moshe was told to convince them of their good fortune for meriting this responsibility.

However, if we closely examine these two Rashis, we will note a slight difference. By the Leviim, Rashi uses the future tense: "You are fortunate that you are about to become the servants of the Ribono shel Olam." Up until this point, the Leviim had just been regular people. This is the point where they are invested with their special status. In other words, it is about to happen in the future. So Rashi appropriately uses the future grammatical tense: "SheTizku li'heyos Shamashim laMakom."

However, by the Seventy Elders, Rashi uses the past tense: "Ashreichem she'nismanisem..." Fortunate you are that you were appointed. But here too, we can ask, it has not happened yet. It is only about to happen! Why the contrast?

Another observation: Immediately following the investiture of the Seventy Elders, the Torah describes the Heavenly punishment that would be administered to the nation for complaining about the Mann and the lack of meat, etc. "To the people you shall say, 'Prepare yourselves for tomorrow (his'kadshu l'machar) and you shall eat meat for you have wept in the Ears of Hashem, saying 'Who will feed us meat? For it was better for us in Egypt!'" [Bamidbar 11:18]. Rashi comments on the words his'kadshu l'machar: Prepare yourselves for punishment.

What is about to occur is a terrible plague. The pasuk testifies that many people died from this plague. Now imagine—today you became the "Parnas al ha'Tzibur" (provider for the community) and tomorrow a great tragedy occurs—hundreds, if not thousands, of people die. "Thanks. That is the job He gave me?"

It is like (l'havdil) being appointed the head of F.E.M.A. (the Federal Emergency Management Agency) the day before a major tornado that caused scores of casualties and thousands of homeless people! What bad luck! One day Moshe tells these Elders – Ashreichem – How fortunate you are! What happens the next day? They have to console thousands of people!

So we have these two questions:

- What does it mean "Fortunate are you who have (in the past) been appointed – she'nismanisem"?
- What is "Fortunate" about the fact that they are imminently confronted with a major national tragedy?

The Tolner Rebbe offers a beautiful insight: Rashi does not call these leaders "manhigim", "nesiim", "rabbonim", "chachomim" – any of which might be appropriate and expected. Instead, he calls them

"parnosim." This word also means a leader, but it has a special connotation. The Gemara relates a story [Brochos 28]. Rabban Gamliel got into an argument with Rav Yehoshua and then went to appease him, to ask for forgiveness. He came into Rav Yehoshua's house and the walls were black with soot. Rabban Gamliel was surprised. He asked, "Why are the walls of your house black? It must be that you are a blacksmith and you work with soot all day. Rav Yehoshua responded to Rabban Gamliel: "Woe to the generation that you are its 'Parnes', for you do not know about the trials and tribulations of the Talmidei Chachomim, what they do for a living, and what it takes for them to acquire sustenance."

In other words, Rav Yehoshua answered him very sharply. "You, Rabban Gamliel, have no idea what the problems of the Torah scholars are. You think my walls are black because I am a blacksmith. In fact, my walls are black because I am as poor as a church mouse. I am destitute. I am living in a decrepit hovel. You are oblivious to how Talmidei Chachomim live and how poor and desperate the people are. Therefore it is a Rachmanus for our generation to have you as its provider!

This is the exact expression Rashi used by the Seventy Elders – "Parnasim" (providers). The connotation of a Parnes is a person who participates with the people in their problems, in their trials and tribulations. He is the type of person who empathizes with the pain of the people.

Now we understand our Rashi. "Ashreichem" – You, Seventy Elders, have been appointed (past tense) over the congregation. Do you know when they were appointed as Parnosim for the community? Not now! They became Parnosim in Egypt! This is their track record. They suffered for the people. That is the meaning of she'nismanisem (past tense).

The Leviim were first now becoming Servants of G-d. But these Elders have already been there. They have talked the talk and walked the walk. They have been beaten for it. Therefore, "Ashreichem she'nismanisem." You are so lucky that IN MITZRAYIM you became the Parnosim of the community. That experience will serve you well. When this upcoming plague is going to happen and people are going to die and suffer, you will be prepared to empathize with their suffering.

You are a Parnes. A Parnes has this ability and this capacity—to deal with people's Tzores. You are not people who have been living in ivory towers, and now suddenly we dump on you and say "Deal with this!" No. You have been there and done that already. This will actually be easier than what you have already been through. In Egypt you had to suffer physical pain. Now, all you need to do is take care of the people's feelings. It is no easy task, but you are well prepared.

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Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky - Genuine Tears

Klal Yisrael goes through a significant transformation in Parshas Bahaloscha. Sefer Bamidbar begins on a high note; the Mishkan is complete with Hashem's Presence surrounding His people. Ready to soon enter Eretz Yisrael, it appears that all of the goals of Yetzias Mitzrayim are about to be achieved. At this very moment, though, something goes very drastically wrong. One downfall occurred after another, and Klal Yisroel were then destined to remain in the desert for another forty years. Although the final blow of the sin of the meraglim does not occur until Parshas Shelach, the seeds for this tragedy are planted in this week's parsha.

Complaining about life in the desert began almost immediately after Yetzias Mitzrayim. Lack of food and water had always served as a catalyst for Klal Yisrael to express their frustration with Moshe and to even speak disrespectfully against Hashem. However, in Parshas Bahaloscha, the nature of their bickering takes on a new dimension. The Torah emphasizes the crying of the Jewish People. It is the crying of this week's parsha that foreshadows an even more serious episode that will occur in next week's parsha, when the meraglim return with their negative report about Eretz Yisrael and the response of the Jewish

People is to cry uncontrollably. That fateful night of tears was destined to become a night of tears for generations to come. The first Tisha B'av had occurred.

Chazal teach us that even after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, we can still reach Hashem through the gates of tears. Requests made while crying are always indicative of a person's genuine desire, and as such are always received by Hashem. However, because of the great power of tears, one must be exceedingly careful not to abuse them. One who is brought to tears over frivolous concerns shows that the important things in his life are these trivial matters. Crying to Hashem for meat, as occurred in Parshas Bahaloscha, misuses that special vehicle to beseech Hashem for the important things in life. Weeping because of unjustified fear of entering Eretz Yisrael triggers a real need to cry for generations. There is a very significant role that crying plays in our avodas Hashem, namely the mitzvah of blowing the chatzotzros, the silver trumpets, and the mitzvah of tekias shofar on Rosh Hashanah. In this week's parsha, we are instructed to sound the chatzotzros on the occasion of war or other national crisis. Similarly, the shofar is blown on Rosh Hashanah, which is a time of great uncertainty as our individual and collective lives are on the line. On both occasions we blow the teruah sound, which resembles the sound of weeping. The imagery of these mitzvos is clear. One who truly is in a moment of crisis and genuinely reaches out to Hashem does so by crying. Hashem very much wants our tears; He wants us to cry for the things that really matter. Connecting to Hashem from the depths of our souls as indicated by our cries is the highest form of tefillah. May Hashem help us discern properly what to ask for and what to cry for. May we save our tears for expressing our total dependence on Hashem for His mercy and not belittle our tears by using them for the trivial matters of this world.

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Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Parashat Beha'alotcha

A Journey to the Unknown

15 Sivan 5781 May 26, 2021

Before the journey, the Torah describes the manner in which the Jewish nation traveled in the desert: a divine cloud settled on the Mishkan, the Tabernacle, and at night, the cloud was like fire. That same cloud that symbolized Divine Presence would determine when the nation would travel and when and where they should camp:

"...and according to the cloud's departure from over the Tent, and afterwards, the children of Israel would travel, and in the place where the cloud settled, there the children of Israel would encamp. At the bidding of the Lord, the children of Israel traveled, and at the bidding of the Lord, they encamped. As long as the cloud hovered above the Mishkan, they encamped. When the cloud lingered over the Mishkan for many days, the children of Israel...did not travel. Sometimes, the cloud remained for several days above the Mishkan...and at the Lord's bidding they traveled. Sometimes the cloud remained from evening until morning, and when the cloud departed in the morning, they traveled. Or, the cloud remained for a day and a night...Whether it was for two days, a month or a year...At the Lord's bidding they would encamp, and at the Lord's bidding they would travel." (Numbers 9, 17 – 23)

These verses describe the Jewish nation's complete dedication to G-d's will. When the cloud would rise above the Mishkan, the children of Israel knew they must get on their way and follow it. When the cloud rested, they knew they should camp at that site. They never knew how long they would journey or how long they would remain encamped. They went to sleep every night knowing that early the next morning, the cloud could rise and they would have to be on their way. Or, the cloud could stay on the Mishkan for an indeterminate period of time and they would stay put until it moved again. Occasionally, the time they remained camped was very short: in the evening they might set up camp after a very long journey and early the next morning, continue on following the cloud.

Why did G-d find this sort of journey necessary? Why couldn't the children of Israel know the journey route in advance and the amount of time they would be staying somewhere?

It seems that such a journey needed total surrender to G-d's will and was meant to train the Jewish nation for a life as the nation of G-d in the Land of Israel. The purpose of the journey was to have them assimilate complete faith in G-d: He who provided them with food and water, and He who determined for them, without telling them in advance, when they would travel and where they would camp. Only thus could the Jewish nation preserve this faith also when residing in their land, in times of peace and abundance as well as in times of war and deprivation. This journey gives every Jew the strength to be devoted to values of goodness, justice and morality despite hardships and at any cost.

When the cloud would rise above the Mishkan or settle in place, not everyone would necessarily notice, so it was necessary to announce to the nation when they were about to reembark on the journey or stop. For this purpose, two silver trumpets were created that the Kohanim (priests) would blow every time the cloud would move. These trumpets also served to assemble the nation around the Mishkan when Moses wanted to convey a message from G-d.

After the verses describing the purpose of the horns, we read a curious commandment:

If you go to war in your land against an adversary that oppresses you, you shall blow a teruah with the trumpets and be remembered before the Lord your G-d, and thus be saved from your enemies. On the days of your rejoicing, on your festivals and on your new-moon celebrations, you shall blow on the trumpets for your ascent-offerings and your peace sacrifices, and it shall be a remembrance before your G-d... (Numbers 10, 9-10)

We are commanded to blow trumpets in war in order to be remembered before G-d and thus be saved from our enemies. Likewise, at times of rejoicing, celebrations, and festivals, we are commanded to blow the trumpets at the Temple to be remembered before G-d. Though it is easy to understand why the trumpets were used to convey messages to a huge congregation, why would G-d need them to remember His nation?

It seems that the reason is related to the use of the trumpets during the journey through the desert. The trumpets – used to announce abrupt departures to the nation – symbolize the Jewish nation's complete devotion to G-d. Therefore, when the Jewish nation blows these trumpets, it is remembered well before G-d.

The reality of our lives leads us on a winding journey. We often find ourselves facing situations we did not expect or prepare for. We can draw from that same total faith in G-d that the children of Israel had in the desert, and use that power to overcome our challenges with peace and joy.

The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.

Rav Kook Torah

Chanan Morrison

BeHa'alotcha: The Triumph of the Ark

Moses' prayer when the Israelites traveled — a request that the Ark of Testimony would protect them from enemies — is very familiar to us, due to its central place in the synagogue ritual of opening the Torah ark:

וַיִּהְיֶה בְּנִסְעֵי הָאָרֶץ, וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה: קוּמָה ה', וַיִּפְצְצוּ אֹיְבָיו. וַיִּזְכְּרוּ מִשְׁנֵאֵיךָ מִכָּנֶה.

"When the Ark traveled, Moses said, 'Arise, O God, and scatter your enemies! Let your foes flee before You!'" (Num. 10:35)

Why the repetition in the verse? Is there a difference between enemies and foes? And how would the Ark scatter these adversaries?

Rav Kook explained that we are besieged by two kinds of opponents. Some are overt enemies, like Amalek. Others are hidden foes, dangers that we may not even be aware of. The Talmud tells the story of the second type of foe: enemy soldiers who attempted to attack Israel in stealth.

The Miracle at the Arnon Pass

As the Jewish people prepared to enter the Land of Israel, the Emorites (one of the Canaanite nations) laid a trap for them. They chipped away hiding places along a narrow pass in the Arnon canyon, across the

Jordan River. Emorite soldiers hid in these crevices, waiting for the Israelites to pass through, when they could attack them with great advantage.

What the Emorites didn't know was that the Ark would smooth the way for the Israelites in their travels through the wilderness. When the Ark arrived at the Arnon Pass, the mountains on each side crushed together, killing the concealed enemy soldiers.

The Jewish people traveled through the pass, blissfully unaware of their deliverance.

At the end of the Jewish camp, there were two lepers, named Et and Vahav. The last to cross through, they noticed that the riverbed washed red with blood from the sides of the canyon. The lepers realized that a great miracle had occurred, and they told the people. The entire nation, grateful for their deliverance, sang Shirat HaBe'er, the song of thanks recorded in Num. 21:17-18.

The Battles of Et and Vahav

The Talmud clearly relates to this story as a historical event, even prescribing a blessing to be recited when seeing the Arnon Pass. Rav Kook, however, offered an allegorical interpretation of the story.

Sometimes it is precisely those who are on the fringes who are most aware of the ideological battles that the Torah wages. The two lepers at the end of the camp of Israel represent two types of conflict that the Torah must confront. The Ark, containing the stone tablets from Sinai and Moses' original sefer Torah, symbolizes the Torah itself.

The names of the two lepers are quite unusual — Et and Vahav. What do these peculiar names mean?

The word Et (אֵת) in Hebrew is an auxiliary word, with no meaning of its own. However, it contains the first and last letters of the word emet (אֱמֶת) — truth. Thus Et is a symbol for the conflicts that originate from new ideas in science and knowledge. It is subordinate and related to absolute truth, but it lacks the middle letter, which is the substance of truth.

The word Vahav (וָהָב) comes from ahava (אַהֲבָה), meaning love. (The two words share the same numerical value.) The mixing up of the letters indicates that this is an uncontrolled form of love. Vahav represents the struggle between free, unbridled living and the Torah's principles; the contest between instant gratification and eternal values.

When these two adversaries — new scientific perceptions (Et) and the culture of living for immediate pleasures (Vahav) — join together, we find ourselves ensnared with no escape, like the Israelites who were trapped in the Arnon Pass. Only the light of the Torah — as represented by the Ark — can illuminate the way, crushing the mountains and defeating hidden foes. These enemies may be unnoticed by those immersed in the inner sanctum of Torah. But those at the edge, whose connection to Torah is tenuous, are acutely aware of these struggles and more likely to witness the victory of the Torah.

The Ark's defeat of hidden adversaries, as the Jewish people began their conquest of the Land of Israel, is a sign for the Torah's future triumph over its ideological adversaries in the current era of our return to the Land.

(Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. II, p. 246 on Berachot 44)

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Behaalosecha

פרשת בהעלותך תשפ"א

בהעלותך את הנרות

When you kindle the lamps. (8:2)

Rashi addresses the juxtaposition of the *parshah* of the *Menorah* upon the conclusion of the previous *parsha*, which details the *korbanos*, offerings, of the *Nesiim* for the *chanukas ha'Mizbayach*. When Aharon took note of the involvement of the *Nesiim* in the dedication of the *Mizbayach*, he became chagrined that neither he nor any members of his tribe, *Shevet Levi*, had been included. We must remember that envy is not a word that could ever apply to someone of the caliber of Aharon *HaKohen*. His spiritual stature obviated any possibility of attributing such a term to him. He was not jealous; he simply desired to play a role

in the sacred inauguration. He did not have to have it all; he felt bad when he missed any opportunity to glorify Hashem.

The Almighty knew the source of Aharon's discomfiture. He calmed him saying, "Yours is greater than theirs, for you will light the *Menorah*." Ramban explains that the *Mishkan/Bais HaMikdash* will not be around forever, and, with its loss, we will also be left bereft of the *Mizbayach*. With no *Mizbayach*, there can be no *korbanos*. The *Menorah* will be supplanted, however, by the *neiros Chanukah*, the lighting of the *Chanukah Menorah*, commemorating the *Chanukah* miracle, which will continue to inspire *Klal Yisrael* until the advent of *Moshiach Tziddkeinu*.

Thus, Aharon's feelings were mollified. Was Aharon really troubled over the *korbanos* brought by the *Nesiim*, or was it the fact that the *Nesiim* were selected over the *Leviim* for this sacred service? The *Mekor Baruch*, *zl*, of Seret Vishnitz explains that Aharon was aggrieved that no member of his tribe was included. It was not a negative reason, but as far as Aharon was concerned, it weighed heavily upon him. Who were the *Nesiim*, and why were they chosen for this prestigious position? These were the *shotrei Bnei Yisrael*, guards, whom Pharaoh had appointed as taskmasters over their brothers. It is regarding them that the Torah relates: "The guards of *Bnei Yisrael* were beaten."

Rashi explains that these guards were Jews who had pity on their oppressed brothers who slaved for Pharaoh. They refused to pressure the Jews. Thus, when they would turn over the bricks to the Egyptian taskmasters and something was missing from the quota (which their Jewish brothers did not supply), the Egyptian taskmasters took out their anger on the Jewish guards, saying that had (they) pressured the Jews more, the quota would have been achieved. Because of this, the guards were found worthy of becoming members of the *Sanhedrin* and the seventy elders. The *Nesiim* were selected for this distinction because they suffered beatings on behalf of their brethren. Aharon wished that he, too, could/would have similarly suffered for them. In other words, it was not the function of lighting the *Menorah* that troubled Aharon; rather, he was disturbed by the fact that because he and his tribe had not been included in the Egyptian slave labor, they did not have the avenue for *mesiras nefesh*.

Aharon was the consummate *ohaiv Yisrael*. How could he not have been present for his brethren? *Shevet Levi*'s function was to learn 24/7. Therefore, the opportunity for *mesiras nefesh* did not avail itself for them. Hashem comforted Aharon that his portion would be greater, because his descendants, the *Chashmonaim*, would sacrifice for *Klal Yisrael* and be the vehicle for the *Chanukah* miracle. It was not about *korbanos* versus candle lighting — *Mizbayach* versus *Menorah*, but rather, about two forms of *mesiras nefesh*: that of the *Nesiim* aka *Shotrei Yisrael*, and the *Chashmonaim*. In any event, we should derive from this spiritual dialogue between Aharon and Hashem that which concerned *Klal Yisrael*'s first *Kohen Gadol*: How much more *mesiras nefesh* can I have?!

בהעלותך את הנרות

When you kindle the lamps. (8:2)

Rashi explains the term, *be'haalosecha*, in its literal sense: "When you raise up (the lamps)." The Torah should have used the word *b'hadlikcha*, which means when you kindle. Rashi offers two explanations which, on the surface, appear unrelated to one another: A) You should light the lamps until the flame rises up by itself (*she't'hei shalheves oleh mei'eileha*); B) You should stand on a step (footstool) situated in front of the *Menorah*. Therefore, "raise up" either means to cause the flame to ascend, or to raise himself up to stand over the *Menorah*. The *Mizrachi* (quoted by *Sifsei Chachamim*) says that these diverse interpretations are both plausible, because they can both be derived from one word.

Horav Moshe Feinstein, *zl*, suggests that the two are connected. The *Menorah* symbolizes the light of Torah learning. Torah illuminates one's life. Torah study has two aspects: *lilmod*, to study; *u'l'lamed*, to teach/disseminate Torah. Accordingly, the word *be'haalosecha* can be explained as pertaining to both *lilmod* and *l'lamed*. *B'ehaaloesecha*, to

cause the flame to ascend on its own, may be interpreted as an injunction to the *rebbe* to teach his

students in such a manner that the student can begin to comprehend the material on his own. The flame which the *rebbe* ignites within the student should rise up on its own (The student should always have a connection with his *rebbe*, but he should have a *derech*, pathway, in learning which his *rebbe* transmitted to them that allows him to learn on his own and to disseminate to others.)

Second, in order to teach on such a far-reaching level, it is vital that the *rebbe* himself be completely proficient in the subject matter, and that he have a profound understanding of the material. Only a *rebbe* who is knowledgeable of all aspects of the topic he is teaching can impart it in such a manner that it will impact his student to the point that he can now go on by himself. One can only teach that which he knows. A *rebbe* whose knowledge is deficient is a flawed teacher whose example will be a turn-off to his students. This idea is symbolized by the stepstool in front of the *Menorah*.

Since the *Menorah* was all of eighteen *tefachim*, it was hardly a problem for any decent-sized *Kohen* to reach up and light the *Menorah*. With regard to the cleaning of the *Menorah*, however, in order to do a good job, to get into the cups and clean out the oily ash, only a *Kohen* standing above the *Menorah* can perform this task with optimal efficiency. It would be best for him to stand upon a stool and look down at the cups and determine their cleanliness. Likewise, prior to disseminating Torah to

others, one must be erudite in all facets, so that he will earn the respect and admiration of his student and serve as an example for him to emulate.

How does a *rebbe* inspire a student to “go it alone,” to continue his spiritual growth on his own? Acting on one’s own initiative requires a strong sense of self confidence. To develop this requisite quality, one must have a clearly defined sense of identity – who he is, his mission as part of *Klal Yisrael*, his abilities, and what is the greatest goal that he can possibly attain. He may neither settle for less than the maximum, nor may he become discouraged along his journey. Success is contingent on a sincere attempt to succeed, because “ours is to do – not to conclude.”

A well-known Chinese proverb asserts: “If you plan for a year – plant rice. If you plan for a decade – plant a tree. If you plan for a century – educate a child.” When education is one’s focus, he is directing his efforts not simply for the here and now, but also for the distant future. To achieve this, he must infuse his student with a sense of mission, a drive and passion to achieve and to think and act on his own. This can only be accomplished when the student sincerely believes in himself, when his identity is clearly defined and remains a source of pride to him. One of the primary reasons that we often fail in the *be’haalosecha es ha’neiros*, in imbuing our students (and children) to function on their own initiative, is that they do not possess positive identity. While this is a common occurrence with one who lacks self-esteem, others do have self-esteem, but fail to make the transition to incorporating their self-esteem into a positive identity. Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski, *zl*, addresses a class of people who lack a feeling of identity, but invariably strive for and attain prestigious positions, simply because of their drive to establish their identity. Thus, when someone (or they themselves) asks, “Who am I/Who are you?” they reply: “I am a doctor, a lawyer, a *rosh yeshiva*, a corporate executive, etc.”; “I am wealthy;” “I have a beautiful home;” “I have a luxury car;” “I travel to exotic places.” The problem with such identities is that

they do not really satisfy one’s issues and deficits. Now, he is an unhappy doctor, unhappy lawyer, unhappy businessman. He has a palatial home which means nothing to him. He is a *rosh yeshiva*, but sadly does not derive satisfaction from it.

A person’s identity must be a true reflection of his inner self. Being a doctor etc., is what he does – not what he is. Rabbi Twerski cites the well-known Chelmitte anecdote of the fellow who went to the *mikvah*.

Alone and undressed, he did not know who he was, “If everyone looks the same, how will I ever know who I am?” He came up with the brilliant idea of tying a red string around his foot. Now he had an

identity. Unfortunately, in the process of showering, his red string slipped off his foot and one of the other fellows walked into it, and now it was on the other fellow’s foot.

When the first Chelmitte noticed the red string on the other fellow’s foot, he remarked, “Pardon me, sir. I see the red string on your foot, which informs me who you are, but could you tell me, who am I?”

A profound lesson is conveyed through this anecdote. If my identity is a red string, then whoever has that string has my identity. Thus, whatever function, position, status I have – if my identity is the status – then the identity follows the title, but I remain unchanged, I still lack a real and true identity, because I have ignored my true self.”

One of the reasons that we grow up not focusing on our identity is that we lack a sense of adequacy and wholesomeness which allows a more satisfactory adjustment to life. One who does not feel good about himself hardly has the motivation to focus on establishing his identity. Rabbi Twerski relates a beautiful and meaningful thought which I feel applies to us all across the board.

It was Friday night, and they had guests at their *Shabbos* table. One of the guests, who was apparently not very knowledgeable about Jewish tradition, asked why six candles were burning on the *Menorah*, rather than the usual two. It was explained that in most families, when one marries, she begins lighting two candles and, with the ensuing birth of each additional child, she adds another candle. Rabbi Twerski, who was a young boy at the time, remembers how good he felt in the knowledge that one of the candles that his mother lit Friday night was for him. He realized that the world was now a brighter place because of him.

Rabbi Twerski did not feel the fulfillment of this powerful message until years later when, in the course of his psychiatric practice, it became evident that countless people suffer from emotional problems and varying psychological symptoms due to deep-seated feelings of inadequacy. He poignantly sums it up: The weekly message to a child, conveyed at the initiation of *Shabbos kodesh*, that his/her existence has brought additional brightness into the home, can be a powerful stimulant for personal development.

לשמור משמרת... ושרת את אחיו...ומבן חמשים שנה ישוב מבצא העבודה

From fifty years of age, he shall withdraw from the legion of work... He shall minister with his brethren... to safeguard the charge. (8:25,26).

The *Levi* “retires” at age fifty from bearing the holy vessels on his shoulders. He continues to function in all their Levite services, such as singing, closing the Temple gates and loading the wagons. The Torah writes: *V’sheireis es echav*, “He shall minister with his brethren”. This refers to giving them wise counsel. The *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos* (5:24) teaches *Ben chamishim l’eitzah*, “The man of fifty is capable for counsel.” Rav Ovadiah Bartenura explains that this (fifty-year function) is derived from the *Leviim* who no longer did any “heavy” labor once they reached fifty years of age. They ministered to their brethren, however, by advising them. *Rabbeinu Bachya* remarks, “As the flesh grows too weak to bear the burdens of physical labor as before, the intelligence grows clearer to see consequences accurately; then, he is eminently suited to give counsel.”

The *Imrei Emes*, *zl*, related that he met an elderly *chassid* who had heard from the *Chidushei HaRim*, *zl*, that he had visited a certain *Rebbe* who told him the following analogy. A fellow was walking through a forest when he lost his way. The farther he journeyed, the more lost he became. Days passed, and he felt that he was in a maze. Everywhere that he went, which according to his calculations would bring him to an exit, only left him more lost, more entangled. During this whole time, he neither heard nor saw a soul. Finally, one day he met an elderly man. His excitement knew no bounds. He would finally locate the exit and leave this miserable place.

He ran over to the man and declared, “*Baruch Hashem*, Thank G-d, I will finally be able to leave. Tell me, my friend, where is the exit from this forest. How do I get out of here? The old man replied, “Young man, I have been lost in this forest for seventy years! I have traveled every direction: north, south, east and west. Everywhere I went, I thought I was on the correct path to the exit. Every time, I was unfortunately

wrong. This has been going on for seventy years. Young man, I cannot tell you how to get out of here. One thing, however, I can tell you: I can show you where not to go. I can tell you which paths and roads are dangerous and which end up at a dead end. I am willing to share with you my seventy years of experience. I can provide you with the roads that will maintain your safety.”

This is what is meant, explains the *Gerrer Rebbe (Imrei Emes)*, by the words *lishmor mishmeres*; “to safeguard the charge.” The best advice about how to protect oneself from evil is to stay away from the roads/paths that lead to trouble and no good. Which roads are those? For that answer we must turn to those who have been on the journey longer than we have and trust their experience. They know where we should not go.

שמו העם ולקטו וטחנו בריחים או דכו במדוכה ובשלו בפרור ועשו אותו עוגות

The people would stroll and gather it, and grind it in a mill or pound it in a mortar and cook it in a pot or make it into cakes. (11:8)

Three expressions in the text address the “delivery” of the *manna*. In *Sefer Bamidbar* (11:9), “When the dew descended upon the lamp at night, the *manna* would descend upon it.” In *Sefer Shemos* (16:4), “The people went out to collect it.” Last (*Bamidbar* 11:8), “The people would stroll and gather it.” We derive from here that, for some, it descended at their front door. Others were compelled to leave the camp and gather it. Last, were those who had to stroll far out of the environs of the camp in order to gather their daily portions.

Likewise, we find three descriptions of the *manna*: bread – ready to eat; cakes, which required baking; ground or pound and cook it – which required preparation prior to cooking. The commentators explain that the recipients of the *manna* (being that it was Heavenly bread) received their portion through varied degrees of effort. What they received -- whether it was “ready-to-eat” or required preparation -- also varied. They explain that it was all based upon one’s spiritual proximity vis-à-vis Hashem. Was the individual righteous or wicked, or perhaps he was a *beinoni*, intermediate, somewhere in between, not righteous and not evil, average.

The *tzaddikim*, righteous Jews, received their *manna* at their doorstep, ready-to-eat; it required effort neither in gathering it, nor in preparing it. The *beinoni*, average/intermediate Jew, was forced to include *manna* gathering in his “morning exercise,” which required that he walk from his tent to the outer perimeter of the camp, and, even then, what he received required baking. It was not yet ready to eat. Last were the *reshaim*, wicked ones, who still had to eat. They went for a morning stroll, or power walk, because their *manna* was far beyond the camp’s perimeter. Furthermore, their portion necessitated pounding or grinding prior to cooking it. Nothing came easy for the *reshaim*, nor should it have.

The *Zohar HaKadosh* explains that the “*reshaim*,” “wicked ones,” were actually all observant Jews. Their failing was in their level of conviction. They lacked the requisite *emunah*, faith, the *bitachon*, trust, in Hashem’s ability to provide for their material and physical needs.

In a well-published lecture, *Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl*, underscored the importance of trusting Hashem to provide our needs, and, concomitantly, the futility of thinking that without *emunah* and *bitachon*, one can achieve any measure of enduring success. He related the story of Chaim, who thought himself to be the stellar public servant, who would daily don his civil service uniform, and, with extreme dedication, leave to carry out his position directing traffic at Yerushalayim’s busy city center. He carried a large baton and a shiny whistle with him and he would go to work with this mission – “to serve and protect” -- upper most on his mind. He did not simply make sure that traffic moved smoothly. It was his life’s mission, his *raison d’etre*, his life. Neither rain nor sleet, frigid cold or brutal heat, deterred him from executing his function. He stood proudly all day in the center of the intersection: hands up to stop the cars; and, when he was ready for them to move, he vigorously waved his hands for them to move onward. Chaim’s determination and commitment were matched by his engaging smile. He was such a “great guy,” the perfect civil servant.

Chaim did not work alone. It would have been too much. He had a partner from day one. His partner was, likewise, very dedicated; he had never missed a day of work, he was always on time, and he did not ever take a lunch break. Chaim’s partner was a traffic light. When Chaim’s wife asked him one day why he ran to work and worked so hard, he said, “The light does its job, and I do mine.” This is the meaning of *hishtadlus*, endeavoring.

One day, Chaim’s anxiety got to him, and his heart, which had heretofore been the repository of all of his emotions, gave out under all the stress. Chaim was rushed by ambulance to the emergency room, where he was immediately connected to a monitor, and his heart stabilized. Chaim was in a panic. Who would watch and direct the traffic? Who would protect the drivers from an accident? The more anxious Chaim became, the lower his chances were for recovery.

One of the visitors to the emergency room attempted to allay his fears: “I know the intersection well. There is an excellent traffic light there. You have nothing to worry about.” Chaim’s wife peeked in, “Do you think that a traffic light can take the place of my husband? If that were to be the case, why has Chaim been working so hard all of these years?”

Rav Sholom employs this story to remind us that in many ways we too are “Chaim.” We work insane hours, expending much physical and emotional energy just to remain in the rat race. We rush through *davening* (for those who bother to attend); pay mere lip service to what we are saying to Hashem; go through the day doing everything we can - earn the mighty, elusive dollar. We come home at the end of the day, tired, miserable, no significant time to spend with our families. Our wives and children suffer. Our Torah learning suffers, because who has the strength and the mental stamina to apply himself to a *blatt Gemora*? We convince ourselves that we must do this now, so that later in life we will put up our feet, relax and learn and *daven* and be a father and a husband – a normal, sociable person.

Where did we go so wrong? How are we like Chaim and his loving wife? We think that we are the ones who generate our material success. We are as wrong as Chaim. The cars stop and go commensurate with the traffic light’s signal. We succeed or fail based upon the *ratzon Hashem*, will of G-d. We should keep this in mind when we quickly pay our (lip service) respects in the morning on our way to work, when we have no time to learn or do all the spiritual endeavors expected of us. When we align our priorities with those of Hashem, we can hope for true success.

Va’ani Tefillah

חסד ואהבת חסד – And a love of kindness.

What does it mean to love kindness? Is it not sufficient to simply perform kindness – without actually loving it? In his commentary to *Parshas Kedoshim* (19:18) on the seminal *pasuk*, “Love your fellow as (you love) yourself,” the *Chafetz Chaim* cites the *Rambam*, who writes that a person should care and take pity on the material possessions and the esteem of his fellow – as he would his own. In other words, we love/care greatly for ourselves, our possessions, our welfare. We should do the same for our fellow. Our attitude toward our fellow should be no different than the feelings we manifest towards ourselves. We love kindness, because we love ourselves, and we are enjoined to love our fellow in the same manner. Acting kindly toward him is our way of showing our love for him. When we are called upon to perform an act of kindness, it should be with love, since we are executing the *mitzvah* of *V’ahavta l’reiacha kamocha*.

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ר' ברוך גימפל בן חיים יהודה ז"ל ואשתו אסתר חנה בת ר' אביגדור ע"ה

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prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum

Reciting Korbanos Daily

Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

This week’s parsha discusses korbanos, the consecration of the Levi’im, and many other matters germane to the Mishkan.

Introduction

Between the recital of morning berachos and Boruch She'amar, which begins pesukei dezimra, is a section of the davening colloquially referred to as "korbanos," since it includes many references to the various offerings brought in the Beis Hamikdash. The goal of this article is to provide an overview and some details about this part of the davening.

This section of the davening can be loosely divided into three subsections:

(1) Introductory recitations

In addition to a few prayers, this includes the recital of various passages of the Torah that have strong educational and moral benefit.

(2) Parshiyos hakorbanos

Recital of Torah passages regarding the offerings and other daily procedures in the Beis Hamikdash.

(3) Chazal regarding the korbanos

The recital of various statements of Chazal that pertain, either directly or indirectly, to the daily offerings.

Introductory recitations

After the recital of birkas haTorah and the other daily morning berachos, the Tur and the Shulchan Aruch both recommend the recital of different parts of the Torah as an introduction to the morning davening, including parshas haman, the passage about the manna falling, the story of akeidas Yitzchak and the aseres hadibros (Orach Chayim 1:5-9). These parts of the davening foster a stronger sense of faith in Hashem and a basic understanding of the purpose of our creation.

The early authorities recommend reciting parshas haman every morning to remember throughout the day that Hashem provides all of our parnasah (Beis Yosef, Orach Chayim Chapter 1; based on Yoma 76a).

Akeidas Yitzchak is recorded in most siddurim at this part of davening, although the majority of people do not recite it daily. Perhaps the justification of this practice lies in the fact that the Magen Avraham (1:7) records in the name of Rabbeinu Bachya (Commentary on Chumash, parshas Tzav, Vayikra 7:37) that it is insufficient to simply read the parshas akeidah; it must be studied well, something that most individuals cannot realistically do on a daily basis.

For some reason that I do not know nor have seen discussed, whereas most siddurim include parshas akeidah at this point of the davening, most do not include parshas haman here. Yet, the same sources -- the Tur, the Shulchan Aruch and others -- that record the importance of reciting parshas akeidah at this point of the davening mention also parshas haman. It appears that one early printed siddur began including parshas akeidah but, for whatever reason, did not include parshas haman, and the other, later printings imitated the earlier edition, something fairly common in publishing of seforim in general and of siddurim in particular.

Aseres hadibros

There is a major halachic difference between parshas haman and the akeidah, on the one hand, and the aseres hadibros on the other. In many congregations, parshas haman and the akeidah were recited together by the entire tzibur, whereas it was prohibited to recite the aseres hadibros as part of daily davening by the tzibur (Shu't Harashba; Rema, Orach Chayim 1:5). The Gemara (Berachos 12a) prohibits this out of concern that those who do not accept authentic Judaism will claim that observing the aseres hadibros is sufficient, and it is not necessary to observe the rest of the Torah. As noted by later poskim, this concern has become much greater in today's world than it was in earlier generations (Divrei Chamudos, Brochos 1:9; Magen Avraham 1:9). For this reason, the aseres hadibros are not printed in the siddur -- since this would be equivalent to making them part of the daily prayer, which Chazal prohibited (ibid.).

Korbanos -- pesukim

The Tur and the Shulchan Aruch both recommend reciting daily the pesukim that describe several of the morning offerings and procedures in the Beis Hamikdash. These are the Torah's discussions about the various types of korbanos, including the processing of the terumas hadeshen (the ashes on the mizbei'ach), the tamid, olah, chatos, and ketores. It also

includes discussion about the kiyor, the laver that was used many times a day by the kohanim to wash their hands and feet.

Why do we recite these passages? The Tur explains: "The recital of parshas hatamid was established on the basis of the midrash's statement that, when there is no Beis Hamikdash, involvement in the recital of the korbanos is treated as if they were offered" (Tur Orach Chayim, Chapter 48). This important concept is based on the posuk in Hoshea (14:3) that states u'ne'shalmah parim sefaseinu, literally, our lips take the place of the bulls, which is understood by Chazal to mean that our lips, by reciting and studying the korbanos, function as a spiritual replacement for the korbanos (Yoma 86b).

Colloquially, this concept is often expressed by referring to the words of Hoshea: u'ne'shalmah parim sefaseinu. The Mishnah Berurah mentions that u'ne'shalmah parim sefaseinu means understanding the procedure -- merely reciting the passages of the Torah by rote, without understanding what is being done, does not fulfill the concept.

In order to fulfill u'ne'shalmah parim sefaseinu, the early authorities cite a custom to recite a prayer after reading each of these sections of the Torah requesting, that the recital of the procedure just mentioned be accepted as if we had actually offered the korban. In many contemporary siddurim, these prayers have been moved from between the pesukim describing the offerings to between the mishnayos of the chapter of Eizehu Mekoman that explain the various korbanos. In some siddurim, you find these prayers in both places.

Standing and in public?

The acharonim disagree whether it is required to stand while reciting the parshas hatamid, the Sefer Olas Tamid and the Magen Avraham ruling that it is required, since all the stages in offering the korban tamid had to be performed while standing. (By the way, no one is ever permitted to sit in the azarah sections of the Beis Hamikdash, with the exception of a Jewish king who is descended from Dovid Hamelech [Yoma 25a et al].) However, most authorities conclude that the parshios hakorbanos may be recited while sitting -- in other words, u'ne'shalmah parim sefaseinu does not require standing, notwithstanding that the korbanos, themselves, were required to be offered while standing (e.g., Elya Rabbah; Bechor Shor; Mor U'ketziyah; Shaarei Teshuvah). We see here a dispute to what extent we should treat the concept of u'ne'shalmah parim sefaseinu.

Reciting them together with the tzibur

Here is another issue in which the question is how far do we take the idea of u'ne'shalmah parim sefaseinu. Although there are some acharonim who contend that parshas hatamid should be said only together with the tzibur, since it is a public korban (Be'er Heiteiv, quoting Derech Chochmah), the consensus of poskim is that this is unnecessary.

Korbanos correspond to prayers

Another reason for the recital of korbanos results from the following Talmudic discussion. The Gemara (Berachos 26b) quotes what appears to be a dispute between early amora'im, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi and Rabbi Yosi berabbi Chanina, whether the three daily tefillos were each established by one of our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, or whether they were established to correspond to the daily offerings. The Gemara's conclusion is that both statements are true: the forefathers established the daily prayers, but, subsequently, Chazal instituted that these prayers should correspond to the korbanos. Because of this last consideration, the times of the daily prayers are linked to the times that the korbanos were offered. Therefore, we read the story of the akeidah, which emphasizes the role of Avraham and Yitzchak in our prayers, and we also study the pesukim about the different korbanos, to strengthen and highlight the relationship between the korbanos and our prayers.

Chazal regarding the korbanos

At this point, we will explore the third subsection of these introductory prayers, which I called above, "Chazal regarding the korbanos." Many early authorities (Tur, Rema) recommend beginning the next subsection of the morning davening by reciting the following passage of Gemara (Yoma 33a), which presents the choreographed order of the morning service in the Beis Hamikdash: "Abaye presented the order in which the

service was performed in the Beis Hamikdash according to the accepted tradition, following the opinion of Abba Shaul:

Tidying the large pyre on the (main) mizbei'ach (altar) precedes tidying the secondary pyre that was used to burn the ketores (incense).

Tidying the secondary pyre precedes placing the two planks of wood on the mizbei'ach. Placing the two planks of wood precedes removing the ashes from the inner mizbei'ach.

Removing these ashes precedes cleaning five lamps of the menorah.

Cleaning these five lamps precedes processing and offering the blood of the morning korban tamid.

This precedes cleaning the remaining two lamps of the menorah.

Cleaning these two lamps precedes offering the ketores.

This, in turn, precedes offering the limbs of the morning korban tamid.

Offering of the limbs precedes the meal offering (that accompanies the morning korban tamid). The meal offering precedes the chavitin (a grain korban offered daily by the kohein gadol).

The chavitin precede the wine offering (that accompanied the morning korban tamid).

The wine offering precedes the musaf offerings (of Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh, or Yom Tov). The musaf offerings precede the spoons of levonah (frankincense offered on Shabbos, to permit the consumption of the lechem hapanim, the showbread).

The offering of the spoons of levonah precedes the afternoon korban tamid (Yoma 33a).

The Tur (Orach Chayim 48) then cites a prayer to be said after this passage of Gemara is recited, similar to that mentioned after the pesukim of each korban.

Subsequently, the Tur asks, "What should someone do if he wants to recite this prayer [i.e., the request that the recital of the procedure should be accepted in place of the actual korban], but he davens in a shul where the tzibur does not say it?" It appears that the Tur is bothered by the following problem: U'ne'shalmah parim sefaseinu is considered equivalent to actually offering the korbanos. If this is true, it is forbidden to recite parshas hatamid twice in the same morning [i.e., once privately, to be able to recite the special prayer, and once with the tzibur], because it is considered as if you offered the morning korban tamid twice, which is a violation of halacha (see Beis Yosef). Furthermore, reciting this prayer after the communal recitation of the parshas hatamid omitted this prayer is inappropriate – he should not do something obviously different from what the community does.

The Tur answers that, in this situation, the person should say parshas hatamid by himself before the tzibur begins davening, and, at that time, recite the prayer requesting the acceptance of these korbanos. He should then recite parshas hatamid again together with the tzibur, since a person should not refrain from joining the tzibur. However, when he recites it together with the tzibur, he should consider it as if he is reading the Torah and not fulfilling the concept of u'ne'shalmah parim sefaseinu. This way he will avoid the concern that the second recitation of the parshas hatamid could be the equivalent of offering the korban tamid twice in the same morning.

No Abayei according to Abba Shaul

Notwithstanding that both the Tur and the Rema record reciting the statement of Abayei, this is not printed in all siddurim. Why not?

Abayei began his statement by noting that he was following the opinion of Abba Shaul. Earlier in mesechta Yoma (14b), the Gemara recorded a dispute between the Sages and Abba Shaul. According to the Sages, the beginning of the order should be as follows: organizing the main pyre of ashes, then the secondary pyre, adding the two planks to the fire, removing the ashes, offering the blood of the morning tamid, cleaning five lamps of the menorah, offering the ketores, and then cleaning the remaining two lamps. In other words, both the Sages and Abba Shaul agree that the cleaning of the menorah is interrupted by another avodah, after completing the first five lights and before cleaning the last two. The dispute between them is whether the processing of the tamid is begun before the cleaning of the menorah, or in the middle, as the interruption, and whether the offering of the ketores is inserted or is performed after the cleaning of the menorah is complete. Abayei's

statement follows Abba Shaul. Those who do recite this statement assume that, since Abayei quoted this statement, he rules like the minority opinion of Abba Shaul, in this instance, and that is the halachic conclusion (Beis Yosef).

However, the Rambam (Hilchos Temidim Umusafim 6:1, 3) and the Semag (Positive Mitzvah #192) both rule according to the Sages, the majority opinion, which means that they do not accept Abayei's testimonial as halachic conclusion. Since Abayei's statement is not according to the halachic conclusion, it is inappropriate to recite this statement as part of davening (see Beis Yosef). Thus, according to the Rambam and the Semag, one should not recite this passage as part of daily korbanos, whereas, according to the Tur and the Rema, one should. Whether we rule according to Abba Shaul or according to the Sages is an issue that will require the Sanhedrin to resolve, when we are ready to begin offering korbanos again, bim'heirah veyameinu.

Eizehu Mekoman

The next part of the morning prayers is Eizehu Mekoman, which is the fifth chapter of Mishnayos Zevachim. The primary reason why this is recited is in order to make sure that every man studies Mishnah every day, in fulfillment of the dictum of Chazal that a person should make sure to study every day some Mikra, some Mishnah and some Gemara (see Kiddushin 30a; Avodah Zarah 19b, as explained by Tur, Orach Chayim Chapter 50). There is no necessity to add more pesukim to make sure that someone studies some Mikra every day since, in the course of our davening, we recite many passages of Tanach, so Mikra is recited daily. But to make sure that everyone studies Mishnah every day, we recite Eizehu Mekoman.

This chapter was chosen as the representative of Mishnah for several reasons: First, there is no overt dispute in the entire chapter. In other words, although there are statements in this Mishnah about which various tanna'im disagree, no disputing opinions are mentioned. Thus, this chapter is purely Mishnah in the sense that it is completely halacha pesukah, accepted as halachic conclusion (Baruch She'amar; see Rambam, Hilchos Talmud Torah 1:11).

A second reason why this chapter was chosen as the representative of Mishnah is because it discusses the laws of the korbanos, making it very appropriate to be recited before davening.

Yet a third reason why this chapter of Mishnah was chosen is because it appears to be very old, dating back to the era of the first Beis Hamikdash. This is based on the fact that it refers to Bein Habadim, which did not exist in the second Beis Hamikdash nor in the last years of the first Beis Hamikdash. The badim (the poles of the aron) were required to always be attached to the aron hakodesh, and Yoshiyahu Hamelech hid the aron so that they would not be captured by the Babylonians when the first Beis Hamikdash was destroyed.

Rabbi Yishmael says

I mentioned above the statement of the Gemara that a man is required to study some Gemara every day. According to the Rambam (Hilchos Talmud Torah 1:11), Gemara means understanding and analyzing the meaning and reason behind the laws. To fulfill the daily study of Gemara, the recital of the passage beginning with the words, "Rabbi Yishmael says" was introduced into the daily davening. This passage is the introduction to the midrash halacha called the Sifra or the Toras Kohanim (these are two names for the same work), which is the halachic midrash on the book of Vayikra.

The Sifra is an unusual work among the midrashim of Chazal in that it is completely halacha. (Although Mechilta and Sifrei are both halachic midrashim, they contain substantive parts of agadah, non-halachic material.) The Malbim wrote two different magnum opus works on the Sifra. He intended to write an extensive commentary to explain how Chazal's method of deriving the halachos in Vayikra is based on a very meticulous understanding of the pesukim. However, after he wrote the commentary on only two pesukim, he writes that he realized that a commentary of this nature would become completely unwieldy – it would be an encyclopedia, rather than a commentary; too long and tedious for anyone to read. Instead, he wrote a different lengthy essay, which he called Ayeles Hashachar, explaining all the principles involved

in explaining the pesukim correctly. Then, throughout the rest of his commentary to the Sifra, he refers the reader to the place in Ayeles Hashachar in which he explained the principle or principles involved in explaining the particular passage of Sifra. In Ayeles Hashachar, the Malbim concludes that there are 613 principles involved to derive the correct halachic interpretation of the pesukim.

Although a regular student of the Gemara will be very familiar with many of the rules that Rabbi Yishmael shares with us, a few of these rules are rarely encountered. An in-depth explanation of the beraysa of Rabbi Yishmael is beyond the scope of this article. Perhaps I will devote an entire future article to explaining Rabbi Yishmael's thirteen principles. Those interested in more detailed explanations of these principles and examples are referred to the commentary of Rav Hirsch on the siddur.

Conclusion

The purpose of many of our korbanos is to assist us in our teshuvah process. The Gemara states: "Come and see, how different are the qualities of The Holy One, Blessed be He, from mortal man. Someone who offends his friend is uncertain whether his friend will forgive him. And, even if he is fortunate that his friend forgives him, he does not know how much it will cost to appease his friend. However, in reference to The Holy One, Blessed is He – should a man sin against Him in private, all the sinner needs to do is to beg Him for forgiveness, as the posuk says, Take with you words and return to Hashem (Hoshea 14:3). Furthermore, the Gemara states, "Teshuvah is so great that because of one individual who does teshuvah, the entire world is forgiven, as the Torah says, with their teshuvah I will heal them... because My anger against them is retracted. Note that the posuk does not state, "My anger is retracted "against him," but against "them" (Yoma 86b) – all of them.

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PARSHAT BEHA'ALOTCHA

Three books in one? So claim Chazal in regard to Sefer Bamidbar! And what's more, one of those three books contains only **two** psukim!

[This statement is based on the 'sugya' in Shabbat 116a (top of the daf) concerning the two psukim of 'va-yehi bi-nso'a ha-ar... ' (that we recite when we take out the Sefer Torah / see Bamidbar 10:35-36).]

To better appreciate the deeper meaning of this statement, this week's shiur discusses an important thematic transition that takes place in Parshat Beha'alotcha.

INTRODUCTION

As anyone familiar with Chumash knows, the text of Chumash in the actual Sefer Torah does not contain any symbols of punctuation. Nonetheless, in Parshat Beha'alotcha we find a very peculiar exception, as the two psukim of 'va-yehi bi-nso'a ha-ar... ' are delimited by two upside down 'nun's' - acting like parenthesis, and thus causing these psukim to 'stand out'.

For this 'technical' reason alone, we can certainly assume that these two psukim must be special. In an attempt to understand the reason for this phenomenon, the following shiur discusses the thematic importance of these two psukim by considering their location at a very pivotal position in Sefer Bamidbar.

HIGH HOPES

To appreciate the internal structure of Sefer Bamidbar, we must first consider what its theme 'should have' been. To do so, let's quickly review the primary themes of the previous three books, as we have discussed in our series of shiurim.

Sefer Breishit focused on God's choice of Avraham (and his offspring) to become His special nation ['bechira']. Sefer Shmot described God's redemption of His nation from Egypt, their subsequent journey to Har Sinai to receive the Torah, and construction of the mishkan – the symbol of God's presence in their midst. Finally, in Sefer Vayikra, Bnei Yisrael received additional laws relating to both the mishkan and 'kedusha' [holiness] in their land and their daily lives.

At this point, Bnei Yisrael were now ready to continue their journey from Har Sinai to inherit the 'Promised Land'. Hence, Sefer Bamidbar 'should have' been the story of that journey and their inheritance of the land. Tragically, in Sefer Bamidbar those goals are never attained; however - by considering those high expectations – we can better appreciate its content and structure.

For example, Sefer Bamidbar began by describing how Bnei Yisrael prepared for their journey to Eretz Canaan by organizing the army while establishing the mishkan at the center of their camp.

Note how this theme (of Bnei Yisrael's preparation for this journey) continues throughout the narrative in the first ten chapters of Sefer Bamidbar:

- * The army is organized and counted (chapters 1-2)
- * The mishkan is placed at the focal point of the camp (2-5)
- * The national leaders participate in its dedication (7)
- * The levi'im are appointed to become the spiritual leaders (chapters 3->4 & 8)
- * The entire nation offers pesach rishon & sheni (chapter 9)
- * Final instructions are given re: how and when to travel (10)

Had nothing 'gone wrong', it would have been precisely at this point (after chapter 10 in Sefer Bamidbar) that Bnei Yisrael should have begun their magnificent journey to the Promised Land. Instead, the next sixteen chapters (i.e. chapters 11-26) discuss exactly the opposite, i.e. how (and why) Bnei Yisrael **did**

not inherit the Land. In those chapters, the Torah describes numerous incidents when Bnei Yisrael rebelled against God, culminating with God's decision not to allow that generation to enter the land.

[The final ten chapters of Sefer Bamidbar (27-36) discuss how the second generation prepares to enter the Land.]

THREE BOOKS

This analysis can help us appreciate the location of the two psukim of 'va-yehi bi-nso'a ha-ar...', as they lie at this junction that divides Sefer Bamidbar into two distinct sections:

- A) **Chaps. 1-10** - Bnei Yisrael's **preparation** for this journey
- B) **Chaps. 11-26** - The actual **journey** (i.e. what went wrong)

The last two psukim of chapter 10 ['va-yehi bi-nso'a ha-ar...'] form the divider between these two sections!

With this background, we can appreciate why Chazal consider Sefer Bamidbar as three books.

As the first ten chapters - preparation for travel - form a complete unit, they can be considered a 'book'. Similarly, chapters 11-36, describing the failure of the first generation, also form a complete unit, and hence can also be considered a 'book'. However, even though the two psukim of 'va-yehi bi-nso'a ha-ar...' form a divider, we must still explain why Chazal consider them as a book as well.

WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN

One could suggest that these two psukim serve as more than just a buffer. Albeit their brevity, they do describe the ideal fashion in which Bnei Yisrael **should** have traveled on their journey to inherit the Land. [For example, compare with Shmot 23:20-27, which describes God's original plan for how Bnei Yisrael would conquer the land.]

To emphasize what 'could have been' in contrast to what actually took place, the Torah intentionally delimits these two psukim with upside down nun's.

If so, then the 'three books' of Sefer Bamidbar would be:

BOOK ONE - Bnei Yisrael's preparation for their journey (1-10)
This 'book' is followed by two 'versions' of that journey:

BOOK TWO - the **ideal** (two psukim) - what 'could have been'

BOOK THREE - the **actual** journey that 'failed'
(i.e. chapters 11-36)

To accent the tragedy of **book three**, the Torah first presents a 'glimpse' of what 'could have been' in **book two** - the glorious manner in which Bnei Yisrael could have travelled, had they not sinned.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

So what went wrong? What caused Bnei Yisrael to sin at the incidents of the 'mit'onenim', the 'mit'avim' and the 'meraglim' etc.?

Chazal find a 'hint' in the pasuk (which immediately precedes 'va-yehi bi-nso'a ha-ar...') that describes Bnei Yisrael's departure from Har Sinai":

"And they travelled **from** God's mountain..." (see 10:33-34).

The Midrash comments:

"Like a child leaving school - running away, in the same manner Bnei Yisrael ran away from Har Sinai a three day distance, for they studied [too much] Torah at Har Sinai..."

[Quoted in first Tosafot on Masechet Shabbat 116a].

This Midrash compares Bnei Yisrael's stay at Har Sinai to a 'school year' [quite appropriate for this time of year]. Even though they studied God's laws at Har Sinai, it seems as though the spirit of those laws were not internalized. The people were indeed

looking forward to **leaving** Har Sinai, but they were not looking forward to keeping God's laws in Eretz Canaan.

Technically speaking, they may have been 'prepared' for this journey, but they most definitely were not spiritually 'ready'. [See further iyun section.]

In this manner, the Midrash is highlighting the underlying reason that led to these sins. Once Bnei Yisrael left with the 'wrong attitude', it was inevitable that they would sin.

But who is to blame? Certainly, first and foremost the people themselves; but if we follow the 'school' analogy of this Midrash, we should also consider the possibility that the 'faculty' may share some of the responsibility as well.

As we study Sefer Bamidbar, we will see how certain incidents may even allude to this possibility. However, the first 'early warning' of teacher 'burn-out' is found already in Parshat Beha'alotcha.

HAS MOSHE 'HAD ENOUGH'?

Beginning with chapter 11, and in almost every incident when Bnei Yisrael sin in Sefer Bamidbar, we find a growing strain in the relationship between Moshe Rabbeinu and the people. Not only do the people constantly complain to Moshe about their plight in chapter 11, even his own brother and sister criticize him in chapter 12!

In chapters 13-14, the meraglim [spies] incite a national rebellion calling for new leadership to take them back to Egypt (see 14:1-5), while in chapter 16 (Parshat Korach) we find yet another rebellion against the leadership of both Moshe and Aharon.

So, what went wrong?

The first sign of this leadership crisis already surfaces in the case of mit'avim (see 11:4-14), immediately after Bnei Yisrael left Har Sinai. Let's note Moshe's petition to God in reaction to Bnei Yisrael's complaint about the stale taste of the manna:

"... And Moshe pleaded to God: Why have You dealt so harshly with Your servant, and why have I not enjoyed Your favor that You have laid the **burden** of this people upon me? I cannot carry all this people by myself for it is too much for me. If you would deal thus with me, **kill me** rather..." (11:11-15).

In contrast to the Moshe Rabbeinu that we were familiar with from Sefer Shmot - who consistently defends Bnei Yisrael before God when they sin, now in Sefer Bamidbar Moshe's attitude appears to be quite the opposite -he would rather die than continue to be their leader!

Note as well the obvious textual parallels that highlight this contrast. Compare:

* "lama hareyota le-**avdecha**..." (Bamidbar 11:11) - with "lama hareyota la-**am** ha-zeh..." (Shmot 5:22)
["Why have you dealt so harshly with Your **people** - for what purpose have you sent me, for since I have gone to Pharaoh in Your Name, things have only become worse..."]

* "lama lo matzati chein be-einecha..." (Bamidbar 11:11) - with "ve-ata im matzati chein be-einecha..." (see Shmot 33:13,16!)

["And now, if I have found favor in Your eyes, let me know Your ways so **I can** find favor in Your eyes - and see that they are **Your people**... and how will I know that I and Your people have indeed found favor - when You allow Your Presence to travel with us..."]

and

* "If this is my plight [to lead them]- I'd rather die..."(11:15)
"If You forgive their sin [fine]... but if not **erase** me from Your book that you have written..." (see Shmot 32:30-32)

[In the above comparisons, note as well the Torah's use of key phrases such as 'charon af Hashem', 'ra'a', 'matzati cheyn be-einecha' etc.]

Is it not ironic that after the incident of 'chet ha-egel' Moshe is

willing to die in order to **save** his nation (see Shmot 32:32), while now he would rather die than **lead** his nation! In Sefer Shmot, Moshe was always 'sticking out his neck' to defend Bnei Yisrael, while now he appears to have 'given up'.

[Note Rashi on Bamidbar 11:28 where he quotes the Sifri that explains how Eldad's & Meidad's prophecy at this incident was that 'Moshe will die and Yehoshua will lead Bnei Yisrael into the Land instead'. This Midrash suggests as well that the failure of Moshe's leadership already begins with this incident of the mit'avim and is not solely due to his sin at 'mei meriva' in chapter 20. / See further iyun section.]

This parallel, suggesting a possible flaw in Moshe Rabbeinu himself, must bother every student of Chumash. Could it be that Moshe Rabbeinu reacted in an improper manner? Is it possible that the greatest prophet of all times, who received the Torah and taught it to Bnei Yisrael, just 'gives up'?

Is Moshe Rabbeinu - who took Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt and faithfully led them to Har Sinai - now unable to lead them on the last leg of their grand journey from Har Sinai to Eretz Canaan?

To answer **yes** would be blasphemous, yet answering **no** would appear to be rather naive.

TOO HOLY TO LEAD

One could suggest that the contrast between Moshe's reaction to chet ha-egel and his reaction to the mit'avim stems from the motive behind each sin.

Despite the severity of chet ha-egel, Bnei Yisrael's sin was the result of a misguided desire to fill the spiritual vacuum created by Moshe's absence. [See shiur on Parshat Ki Tisa.] In contrast, the sin of the mit'avim seems to have been totally physical - an uncontrollable lust for food ['hit'avu ta'ava'].

Chet ha-egel presented an educational challenge that Moshe Rabbeinu is willing to accept, i.e. to take this misguided desire and channel it in the proper direction. [Note commentators who understand the building of the mishkan as a 'tikkun' for the misguided intentions that led to chet ha-egel.]

However, after the lustful sin of the mit'avim, Moshe Rabbeinu simply 'gives up'. He is unable to fathom how this nation, after spending an entire year at Har Sinai, have become so preoccupied with such mundane desires. Moshe simply does not have the educational tools to deal with such a low level of behavior. [In other words - Moshe was hired to be a teacher, not a baby-sitter!]

God's immediate reaction to Moshe's petition may reflect this aspect of Moshe's leadership. God finds it necessary to take some of the **ruach** (spirit) from Moshe and transfer it to the seventy elders (see 11:16-17). God realizes that Moshe must now share some of his leadership responsibilities with elders who can possibly deal more realistically with this type of crisis.

One could suggest an additional insight. In Sefer Bamidbar, Moshe Rabbeinu could be considered 'over qualified' or 'too holy' to lead the people.

After spending some six months on Har Sinai, Moshe Rabbeinu is on a spiritual level far higher than that of his nation. It is not that Moshe Rabbeinu is incapable of leading, rather the nation is on too low a level to benefit from his leadership. Quite simply, 'over-qualified' for the job. [Iy'h, we'll return to this topic in our shiur on Parshat Chukat.]

Ultimately, Yehoshua will be chosen to lead Bnei Yisrael into the Promised Land. As the dedicated student of Moshe Rabbeinu, and the experienced leader of his own tribe (and of the entire army in the battle against Amalek), Yehoshua possesses the necessary leadership qualities. He is also sufficiently 'down to earth', and therefore will be able to lead Bnei Yisrael into the 'land'.

The lesson that we can learn from this Parsha is certainly not 'how to criticize' Moshe Rabbeinu. Rather, it should remind us when teaching - to keep in mind the emotional needs of our students; and when studying - to keep in mind the potential of how much we can gain from our teachers.

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FOR FURTHER IYUN

1. See Shmot 34:30-35 in relation to the 'masveh' - the veil - that Moshe wore after his descent from Har Sinai.

How does this relate to the above shiur?

2. Considering the parallel between Har Sinai and Gan Eden, why do you think that the sin of the **mit'avim** ('ta'ava') is significant?

[Relate to Breishit 3:6-8!]

3. In relation to the Midrash quoted in the shiur on: 'Va-yis'u me-har Hashem' (10:33) : 'ke-tinok ha-boreiach mi-bet ha-sefer' [like a child running away from school]

Most children stay in school because they must. Usually, school attendance is not an outcome of total identification with the importance of education, rather a result of parental coercion. A child's joy on the last day of school usually does not stem from recognition of his academic achievements, but more likely from his expectations for having fun during vacation.

This, according to Chazal, was the level of Bnei Yisrael after their year at Har Sinai. They did not fully appreciate the privilege of receiving the Torah. Instead of looking forward to transferring the ideals of the Har Sinai into daily life in Eretz Yisrael, they were more interested in just getting on with normal life, while 'running away' from their spiritual obligations.

4. Note how later on in Sefer Bamidbar, Moshe's initial reaction to most every complaint is 'va-yipol al panav' - and 'he fell on his face'./ See meraglim, korach and mei meriva.

Thus, Moshe's reaction to the mit'avim is not an isolated event. It opens an entire chain of incidents in which Moshe Rabbeinu's leadership appears to falter, concluding with the events of mei meriva (20:7-13) where God decides that Moshe cannot lead Bnei Yisrael into the Promised Land.

As we explained, the famous Midrash concerning the 'nevu'a of Eldad and Meidad (the two elders who were not included with the other seventy / read 11:26-29) reflects this connection between Moshe's reaction to the sin of the mit'avim and his ultimate fate of not entering Eretz Yisrael. Even though the Torah does not specify precisely what Eldad & Meidad had said, the Midrash fills it in for us:

"Moshe meit ve-Yehoshua machnisam la-aretz" - Moshe is going to die and Yehoshua will lead them into the Land (Rashi 11:26).

Although this interpretation is not the obvious 'pshat' of these psukim (as we can discern from Moshe Rabbeinu's reaction to Yehoshua's complaint / see 11:26-29), the Midrash may be alluding to the overall pshat of this parsha in Sefer Bamidbar. In the very same 'parsha' where Moshe is unable to deal with the mundane complaints of the people, the Midrash already sees his ultimate inability to lead Am Yisrael into Eretz Yisrael.

PARSHAT BHA'ALOTCHA (shiur #2)

"CHALSHA DA'ATO SHEL AHARON"

Why was Aharon depressed?

The first Rashi in this week's Parsha deals with this question as he explains the juxtaposition between the first topic in Parshat Bha'alotcha - for Aharon to light the Menorah (8:1-5), and the last topic in Parshat Naso - the twelve day dedication ceremony of the Mizbayach (7:1-88):

"Why is the parsha of the Menorah juxtaposed to 'chanukat ha'nssiim' (the special offering brought by the princes of each tribe)? - When Aharon saw the daily dedication offering by the 'nssiim', he became DEPRESSED, because neither he, nor his shevet, took part in this ceremony. - God assured Aharon saying: Do not worry, YOUR PORTION IS GREATER than theirs, for you are to light and attend to the MENORAH every morning and evening."

IS AHARON REALLY 'LEFT OUT'?

Ramban immediately questions the basic assumption of this Midrash (as quoted by Rashi):

"Could it be that Aharon is depressed because he felt 'left out'? After all, each "nasi" enjoyed only ONE day of special attention, while Aharon was at the center of attention during each of those TWELVE DAYS! Did he not offer all of the korbanot on each of those days, as well as the ktoret and korban tamid?

Furthermore, during the miluim ceremony (see Vayikra 8:1-36) that preceded that dedication, he and his children enjoyed seven days of 'exclusive attention'. For what possible reason could Aharon have felt 'left out'?

In this commentary, Ramban is unable to find a satisfying explanation of this Midrash according to "pshat". Instead, he suggests that the intention of the Midrash is not to explain the psukim, but rather to show a biblical source for the Hasmonean revolt:

"Even though Aharon did not participate in the dedication of the mizbayach of the Mishkan, in the merit of his descendants - the Hasmoneans - the mizbayach of the Second Temple will be dedicated. Furthermore, in commemoration of that event, a Menorah will be lit in every home, even after the destruction of the Temple " (see Ramban 8:1).

One could suggest an alternative explanation of the Midrash, without the need of limiting its significance to the events of the Hasmonean revolt.

COALITION POLITICS

The opening statement of the Midrash - "chalsha da'ato shel Aharon" (Aharon became depressed) - requires explanation. [Note that Ramban had raised this question, but did not answer it directly.]

Considering that Aharon is indeed at the center of attention and very busy during each day of the dedication ceremony, why should he have become depressed?

To understand Aharon's reaction (according to the Midrash) we must consider the political realities of his predicament. Bnei Yisrael are about to leave Har Sinai and begin their journey to conquer and inherit the Land of Israel. Although Aharon is indeed a very key figure during Bnei Yisrael's short stay in the desert, he is apprehensive about what will most probably take place once Bnei Yisrael leave Har Sinai. The focus of national attention will shift to the excitement of military initiatives and political enterprise. Har Sinai, and maybe even the Mishkan, will soon be 'long forgotten'.

Once the conquest of Eretz Canaan would begin, it will be the twelve "nssiim" (the tribal leaders) who will hold the highest positions of national leadership. They will establish economic policy; they will make treaties with foreign dignitaries; they will make the speeches at national gatherings; they will lead the nation in war. [In modern phraseology, they will become the Ministers of Defence and the Treasury; Secretaries of State and Foreign Affairs.]

Thus, it is quite understandable why Aharon becomes depressed. When he sees the attention that the twelve "nssiim" receive, he realizes the insignificance of his position within the emerging national leadership. What ministry post will he receive? In his own eyes, he may have begun to view his job as merely the "shamash" (a beadle/ attendant) taking care of the Mishkan. Indeed, a very technical job at best.

Will he have any influence lasting influence on the nation? At best, he may possibly be appointed "sar ha'datot" - the Minister of Religion. Within a short time, Aharon fears, he will be distanced from national leadership.

AN IMPORTANT CABINET POST

Thus far, we have suggested a reason for Aharon's depression (according to the Midrash). What is the significance of

God's consolation -that he will light the Menorah?

Although the Midrash is well aware of Aharon's numerous responsibilities in the Mishkan, it chooses specifically the Menorah to symbolize an additional aspect of his national duties, i.e. teaching God's laws to the people. This double purpose is mentioned in the blessing to Shevet Levi in Parshat v'Zot ha'bracha:

"They shall TEACH Your laws to Yaakov, and your instructions to Yisrael, they shall offer Your incense... and offer the 'olah' ("kalil") on Your mizbayach..." (Devarim 33:10)

Once Bnei Yisrael will enter the land, teaching the laws of the Torah will become the PRIMARY duty of the Kohanim and Leviim. Since their work is divided into 24 week shifts, the average kohen or levi would find himself working in the Mishkan only two weeks a year. Therefore, most of their time would be spent teaching and judging the people (see Devarim 17:8-10). It was for this reason that their cities are scattered throughout the twelve tribes of Israel (see Bamidbar 35:1-8 and Yehoshua 21:1-40).

Thus, the Menorah may symbolize specifically this duty of the Kohanim - "chinuch", teaching. If the purpose of the Menorah is to spread light, then the purpose of the kohanim is to spread Torah to the entire nation. This understanding can explain why Aharon is consoled when told that it is his job to light the Menorah.

If we continue with our parallel to the realm of national politics, one could explain that Aharon and his "shevet" are consoled - for they are given a responsibility similar to the control the Ministry of Education and Justice (in addition to the Ministry of Religion) - a cabinet position no less important than any other!

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FOR FURTHER IYUN - PART II:

1. According to pshat, one could suggest a simple reason for the juxtaposition of these two parshiot?

Notice that the final psukim of perek 7, which summarize the korbanot brought by the nssim, are actually referring to the first day of the dedication ceremony when all the nssim brought their korbanot together, at the same time (read 7:10-11 carefully!). Furthermore, 7:89 - the dibur to Moshe - also takes place on the first day.

Therefore, Bha'alotcha opens in the 'afternoon' of the first day of the dedication of the Mishkan. The only avodah left, which did not begin in the morning, is the lighting of the Menorah, for it is lit "m'erev ad boker" - from evening to morning! This may explain why this mitzvah is included at this time.

2. Compare this juxtaposition between the dibur to Moshe (7:89), and his relationship to Aharon (8:1-5) and the Nsim (7:1-88) to the psukim which describe Moshe's descent from Har Sinai - according to Shmot 34:29-32! Relate this to the connection between Har Sinai and the function of the Mishkan!

Parshat Be-Ha'alotecha by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

INTRODUCTION:

Parashat BeHa'alotekha is a lot like its name: long and complicated. To appreciate this parasha, we need special preparation. We will first look at themes and events from a "bird's eye" perspective to get a sense of the flow of things, and then will focus on a few specific incidents in the parasha.

PART I: THE BIRD'S EYE VIEW:

- 1) The parasha begins with the lighting of the menorah in the Mishkan and moves on to other matters, some connected to the Mishkan and its service, some connected with the proper functioning of the camp as it makes its way through the desert. Which events toward the beginning of the parasha (perakim 8-10) relate to the Mishkan, and which to the setting up of or proper functioning of the camp? (Categorizing things helps in understanding and memory.)
- 2) The second half of the parasha reports a series of disasters: make yourself familiar with the names "Tav'era" and "Kivrot HaTa'ava" and with the events that happened there. Also make yourself familiar with the events surrounding the incident at the end of the parasha involving Miryam, Aharon, and Moshe.
- 3) If you were splitting the Torah into parshiot, wouldn't you have put the events of question #2 and the events of question #3 in separate parshiot? What are they doing together here in Parashat BeHa'alotekha? How does their presence in one parasha reflect the overall theme of Sefer BeMidbar as we have discussed it?

PART II: SOME SPECIFIC ISSUES:

- 1) Most of us probably assume that the bekhorim (firstborn sons) lose their holiness because they participated in (or led) the worship of the Egel. What are some other possibilities?
- 2) Whatever we answer to the above question, another question remains: why did Shevet Levi deserve to receive the holiness of the bekhorim and their status as servants of Hashem in the Mishkan and Beit HaMikdash?
- 3) In perek 9, the Torah reports how the cloud signaled whether the camp should travel or stop. What is strange about this short section, and how would you account for this strange feature?
- 4) Two events occur in perek 10 which seem unnecessary for the Torah to report to us: the narrative which tells how the camp begins its first move, and the invitation of Moshe to Hovav, his father-in-law. The former seems unnecessary because the previous parshiot have already described in repetitious detail exactly how the camp was supposed to move. The latter seems unnecessary because it appears not to teach us much. How would you explain why the Torah records these events?
- 5) In the middle of perek 11, amid the people's complaints and demands for meat, Moshe seems to run out of steam as leader, and he too complains against Hashem. Shortly afterward, he seems to question Hashem's omnipotence (by doubting that Hashem can produce enough meat for the people). What is Moshe disappointed with? What was he unprepared for as leader of this people? Does he learn from this experience and revise his expectations, or does he remain bitter and disappointed? What do we learn about leadership from Moshe's experience?
- 6) As for the Miryam/Aharon episode in the end of the parasha, there are so many questions that I don't know where to begin. [As you will see from the shiur, we didn't have time for this section.]

THE SHIUR:

Before we start, I want to say that my ideas about this parasha have been greatly impacted by the perspective of the Rav, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, zt"l, who gave a shiur on this parasha many years ago (1974) which has become somewhat famous. The shiur is available as an audio cassette and is also transcribed and available somewhere on the internet, I'm

not quite sure where. I have used several short pieces of this transcription in this shiur. Let me introduce the parasha with a quote from the Rav:

"Torah is not only important to explain intellectually in categories, but also in emotional categories. If you want to understand the beauty and greatness of the Torah, the emotional mood which is created by the reading of the Torah is perhaps more important than the intellectual gesture. Read BeHa'alotekha carefully."

First we will take a bird's eye view of the parasha and try to figure out what its theme might be in the context of the Humash Ha-Pekkudim (the most meaningful of the names for Sefer BeMidbar, as we discussed on Parashat BeMidbar; if you missed that shiur, it is pretty important to read it in order to understand this week's).

TAKING STOCK:

What events occur in this parasha?

8:1-4 -- Moshe is given some instructions for how Aharon is to light the Menora.

8:5-26 -- Hashem gives instructions for the ceremony in which the Leviyim are dedicated to Hashem as servants of the Mikdash under the supervision of the kohanim.

9:1-14 -- Hashem instructs the people to bring the Korban Pesah and provides a 'second chance' option for those unable to bring the korban on Pesah (i.e., Pesah Sheni).

9:15-23 -- An elaborate, repetitive description of the movement of the Divine cloud as the signal to the people to camp and to travel.

10:1-10 -- Hashem gives instructions for the creation and use of trumpets: to gather the people or their leaders, to signal travel or war, and to blow over certain korbanot.

10:11-28 -- A detailed description of the actual moving of the newly constituted camp for the first time, organized according to degalim (military formations).

10:29-32 -- Moshe's invitation to Hovav, his Midyanite father-in-law, to accompany Bnei Yisrael to their land.

10:33-36 -- Description of the function of the Aron in the travels of the people.

11:1-3 -- The people complain and are punished (Tav'era).

11:4-35 -- The people complain for meat and are punished (Kivrot Ha-Ta'ava); Moshe complains to Hashem and is told to spread his authority among the Zekenim; in an aside, Moshe wishes that all of the people could be prophets.

12:1-16 -- Miryam's complaint to Aharon against Moshe, and Hashem's reaction.

WHERE IS THE CONTINUITY?

One way to categorize the above events would be the following:

- 1) "Setting up the camp / appointing people to various functions."
- 2) "Narrative of how this all goes into action."
- 3) "Catastrophe / things falling apart."

Categories 1 and 2 occupy perakim (chapters) 8-10; category 3 occupies perakim 11-12. Right in the middle is the short section of "va-yhi binso'a," which is surrounded by upside-down "nuns" like parentheses.

On the preparation sheet, we asked what these different sets of events -- those in perakim 8-10 and those in perakim 11-12 -- are doing together in one parasha. It is pretty clear that the commands to assign various functions to different groups

(category 1) flow naturally into the narrative of how all these things swing into action (category 2). But how about 11-12? What is the connection between 8-10 and 11-12? They seem to be working in opposite directions.

PREPARING FOR DESTINY:

In our introduction to Sefer BeMidbar, we talked about the two clashing visions expressed in the sefer (book): the vision of Hashem and Moshe and the vision of the people. Hashem and Moshe envision a grand, triumphant march from Sinai straight to Eretz Canaan, where the conquest of the land will provide the nation with the home they have been promised. Preparing for this march, the nation is organized militarily and religiously:

1) Militarily: The men are counted and assigned to military units; commanders are appointed over the armies. Trumpets are used to gather the people and to signal to travel. The special Divine cloud leads the way and signals when to move and when to camp.

2) Religiously: Paralleling the army ("YOTZE'EI tzava," the army which "goes OUT,") the Leviyim are counted and appointed (in place of the bekhorim) to serve Hashem in the Mikdash and transport it through the desert (i.e., they are the "BA'EI tzava," the army which "goes IN," focusing not on external enemies, but on the Mishkan which is at the center of the camp. Paralleling the use of the trumpets to call to the people (above), the trumpets are set up to call to Hashem in times of crisis (war) or religious excitement and triumph (festival korbanot). The special Divine cloud indicates Hashem's constant presence among the people, as does the Aron's (Ark's) progress ahead of the people to lead them on the correct path through the desert.

This process is a nationwide revolution, the imposition of order on an unruly confederation of loosely organized tribes. Until now, no one had a particular job besides Moshe, the kohanim, and the tribal leaders. Now, 600,000 men are soldiers with commanders, several thousand are assigned to service in the Mishkan, and an intracamp communication system has been set up.

The Rav puts all of this into perspective:

"There is a mood of expectancy and tension. Expectancy permeates the pages of BeHa'alotekha. There is a mood of mobilization and rigid order in the air. All conditions were met, the reward is about to be granted, finally the promise to Abraham is about to be fulfilled. The "I will bring them" will become the fifth freedom. The people are on their final, triumphal march. In this mood, Moshe was excited. He was expecting great things. There is tenseness in the air, and there is determination and boldness to break through if necessary."

Now that all of these structures have been built, the entire camp shifts with ponderous, thunderous grace into motion. Imagine an elephant moving at the instructions of its trainer. Then imagine a herd of elephants all traveling together in formation; and now imagine 1,000 herds of elephants all moving together in perfect synchronization, and you will have some idea of the colossal scale of the movement of this group of people and the beauty and grace of its organization into formations, all around the Mishkan.

Confidently, Moshe invites his father-in-law to join in his people's good fortune, as the Rav puts it:

"Join our triumphal march," Moshe said to Yitro, "towards our destiny. It may become your destiny as well." When I read this parasha, it attracts me; there is something moving, touching. Sometimes I want to cry when I read this parasha. The simplicity with which the great Moshe, the master of all wise men and the father of all prophets, speaks. He uses the grammatical first person: "We are setting out . . . come with us, and we will treat you well . . . whatever good the LORD does for us . . ." What does it mean? Moshe was certain. There was not even a shadow of doubt in his mind that he was going to enter the promised land. He and the entire congregation will be classified as both Yotz'ei Mitzrayim (departers from Egypt) and Ba'ei ha'Aretz (those who come into the Land). He was sure, he was convinced that he would see the beautiful land, the hills of Judea, the prairie land of the Sharon Valley, he was certain that he would climb the mount of Lebanon.

MURMURS OF TROUBLE:

But then comes perek 11. Suddenly, the entire flow of the parasha is reversed.

It starts quietly -- the first we hear is a murmured report of "mit'onenim," complainers, but we get no elaboration. Then we hear the shocking news that Hashem is so upset with these complainers that He begins to kill them! This is "Tav'era."

The next story launches into a full-blown report of another set of complaints: the people's demand for food other than the "man" (manna). They are tired of the "same old same old," and they look nostalgically back at Egypt and the great variety of different foods they ate there. They long for meat. Imagine what sort of mentality could look back at Egypt with wistful nostalgia.

What is Hashem's reaction, and what is Moshe's? Hashem becomes angry, and Moshe, the Torah tells us, sees the situation -- or the people -- as 'ra,' 'evil.' But then the Torah turns aside for a few moments from how Hashem deals with the desirous people and focuses on a shocking interaction between Hashem and Moshe.

Moshe is apparently so disheartened by the people's behavior that he asks Hashem to kill him rather than saddling him with this burden. Moshe, never one to mince words with Hashem, says quite directly that he did not sign on as a nursemaid and that he refuses to bear this burden alone. It seems that the gulf between Moshe's vision of the religious destiny of the people and the people's own interests -- more varied foods -- is too much for Moshe, and he gives up. He cannot bridge the gap, he cannot educate these people, he cannot drag them along with him. He sees his failure looming up before him, and he prefers death over demoralization. Moshe is beyond disgusted with the people; he despairs of them.

Abravanel raises a key question: why doesn't Moshe jump to defend the people against Hashem's anger, as he did on other occasions, such as in the wake of the Egel?

ABRAVANEL:

"It was revealed and known before Moshe what punishment would come upon them because of this [their complaints]. When he saw this, the Master of Prophets thought of a strategy which would assuage His anger, blessed be He, so that He, in His mercy, would pass over their sin. It [the strategy] was that before the decree and punishment which He would do because of this, Moshe would 'make himself' pained because of the Bnei Yisrael and say that he does not want to lead them, so that Hashem would beseech Moshe to pass over their sin and not abandon them. This, [Moshe thought,] would be a way to have them forgiven, and so Moshe hurried to say before Him, "Why have you done evilly"

This is a clever suggestion, in my humble opinion, but perhaps too clever. There is too much authenticity in Moshe's despair, too much melodrama in his request to die, to allow this to be a ploy. In any event, if this is what Moshe is up to, he fails, as Hashem is not "distracted" by Moshe's complaint and, after dealing with Moshe, he punishes the people severely. We may come to a better answer than the Abravanel's, but for now let us hold the question.

MOSHE THE NURSEMAID:

Now, it is clear that Hashem is upset with the people -- "va-yihar af Hashem" -- but is this Moshe's reaction as well? A careful reading of the end of this same pasuk shows that Moshe's reaction is hard to read at this point: "u-ve-einei Moshe ra" -- "and in the eyes of Moshe, it was bad"; it is not clear yet what this means. Was the people's behavior bad? Was Hashem's anger bad in his eyes? Was Moshe's own position bad? But then Moshe turns to Hashem to complain and provides a fuller picture of what is on his mind.

Moshe, it seems, is not upset with the people. Moshe is upset with Hashem. If you remember back a long way, back in Sefer Shemot when Hashem commanded Moshe to go to Paro (Pharaoh) and demand the release of Bnei Yisrael, Moshe finally acceded to Hashem's insistent command and delivered Hashem's word to Paro. Paro concluded that his Israelite slaves had too much time on their hands and were relieving their boredom by cooking up dreams of freedom. His reaction was to increase the people's already inhuman workload. The people, of course, were furious with Moshe. Using almost the same exact words as he uses here, Moshe turns to Hashem and complains: "Lama harei'ota la-am hazeh" -- "Why have You done evil to this nation?" (Shemot 5:22). Here, Moshe says, "Lama harei'ota le-avdekha" -- "Why have You done evil to Your servant?"

Back then, Moshe was angry with Hashem, not only for making him a villain in the eyes of the people, but also for worsening the plight of the people: "Why have You acted evilly toward this nation?" is the first complaint, and "Why did You send me?" is the second claim. Now, in Sefer BeMidbar, Moshe makes no complaint on behalf of the people; by now, Hashem has shown Moshe that He has the intent and power to immeasurably improve the lives of these former slaves. Back then, "And you have not saved Your nation"; by now, Hashem has indeed saved them from Egypt and honored them and elevated them with His Torah.

Moshe therefore has only one complaint: he feels like a complete failure, and it is Hashem's fault for giving him a job he cannot do. "Where will I get meat for all of these people?", Moshe complains despairingly. "Why have You done evil to me?" He claims that he cannot bear this burden on his own, and if he is forced to do so, he would rather die and "not see my own failure." Here Moshe twice uses the same word -- "ra" -- as the Torah used just before to describe Moshe's reaction to the people's complaints. Hashem was angry, but "u-ve-einei Moshe ra." What was the "ra?" Was it the "ra" of the people, their ungratefulness, their pettiness? Apparently not -- "al er'eh be-ra'ati" -- I would rather die than continue "to witness my own failure [ra]." The "ra"/evil that Moshe saw was his own: he felt so responsible for the people that he preferred to die than to lead them without being able to provide for their needs.

Moshe asks Hashem, "Am I a nursemaid, that I should carry them in my bosom?" Abravanel asks why Moshe uses the word "omein" as opposed to "omenet"; the first means "male nursemaid," while the second means "female nursemaid." In answering, Abravanel paraphrases Moshe:

ABRAVANEL:

"What is worse among all this is that you have made me like a male nursemaid, not a female nursemaid, for a female nursemaid, when she carries the suckling baby and he cries, can calm him by giving him milk from the comforting breast. But the male nursemaid, the husband of the female nursemaid, cannot calm the suckling, for he has no breast and milk. The baby will simply cry and cry and not be comforted! Similarly, I have become like a male nursemaid, since You have placed upon me the burden of this entire people; and I have not found favor in Your eyes, that You would give me the power to grant their request and petition, for where shall I get meat for this entire nation, since they are crying upon me and saying, 'Give us meat so that we can eat it!' They are like a baby who demands milk from the *male* nursemaid's breast, but he has nothing at all to give him to calm him." Because of this, "I cannot alone bear this entire nation."

According to Abravanel, Moshe uses this image to express his frustration at his failure to meet the people's needs. A baby cries, the people cry. A baby wants milk, the people want meat. Moshe has no milk to offer as a nursemaid, and he has no meat to offer as leader of these crying people. Hashem has set him up to fail.

But why is Moshe not angry also at the people? Why is his frustration here not directed at them as well as at Hashem? Again, Moshe provides the answer: when he angrily insists that he cannot bear the burden of this people, he asks indignantly: "Did I father this people, did I give birth to them, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom,' as a nursemaid would carry a suckling?!" Moshe does not blame the people because he sees the people as a "yonek," a suckling.

My son Avraham Yosef is just over two months old, a very cute and smiling little boy, but I don't expect him to know better than to complain and whine (sometimes). He is quite literally a "yonek," just a suckling. Moshe looks at the Bnei Yisrael the same way: he must hold them by the hand and provide for their every need, and he does not expect greatness from them at this early stage in their development. But now those needs grow beyond Moshe's ability to provide, and he turns to Hashem to lay blame. Hashem has hired him to baby-sit, but has left him no food to feed the baby. What is he supposed to do when the baby gets hungry and starts to scream for food? He is powerless, so he turns to Hashem and tenders his resignation as baby-sitter.

Moshe remembers that these are the same people who became fearful when he did not return from the mountain, the same people who built an idol and danced around it to soothe their fears and provide themselves with at least symbolic leadership in his unexplained absence. Moshe knows this people well, and he has been hoping that as events unfold, the people will begin to trust Hashem and take an interest in the lofty goals Hashem has set for them as a nation. But as our parasha intimates, the people remain "yonekim," sucklings. They are unable to mature, frozen in the dependent and insecure mentality of slavehood. They have no interest in a grand destiny. They want meat, fish, tasty vegetables. They are tired of "just one taste," even if it comes straight from Hashem every morning with the dew.

Eventually, Moshe will lose patience with the people as well, as we will see later on in Sefer BeMidbar, but for now, he blames only Hashem.

MOSHE'S SLIP:

Perhaps this perspective on Moshe's sense of failure and consequent anger with Hashem can explain the shocking exchange which takes place between Hashem and Moshe in the next moment. Hashem first instructs Moshe to gather seventy elders to share the burden of leadership with him. Then he tells Moshe that He will soon provide the people with meat. But Moshe seems not to believe that Hashem can produce enough meat.

How can Moshe doubt Hashem's power? He who split the sea, He who produced locusts beyond number, swarms of frogs, lice, wild animals, He who pelted Egypt with burning hail, cannot also produce some meat?

Many commentators attempt answers. Here, Rav Yosef Bekhor Shor (a medieval commentator) paraphrases Moshe:

BEKHOR SHOR 11:21 --

Moshe said, "Six hundred thousand . . ." This is what it means: "What kind of meat will be enough for them? For if You had said, 'I shall rain for them meat from the heavens,' as You said regarding the 'mon,' I would not wonder. If You had said, 'I will bring them animals and beasts,' there would be no wondering, for I know that You are all-powerful. But You said, 'I shall give them meat,' which makes it sound like this meat is already somewhere in the world! Where in the world is there enough meat to satisfy them?!" This is the reason Hashem was not angry at him, for he never said that He *could not* give them, he just wondered where in the world it was, so Hashem answered him, (11:23) "Is the arm of Hashem too short?", meaning, "Even in the world, I have many creations of which you do not know."

This will not do, I humbly assert: Hashem responds to Moshe's disbelief by saying, "Is Hashem's hand too short? Now you shall see if My words come to pass or not!" It certainly sounds like Hashem understood Moshe's statement as disbelief in His ability.

Abravanel suggests a number of answers; the first answer is that Moshe misunderstood Hashem's instructions and thought that Hashem was telling *him* that *he* was responsible to gather meat for them. Moshe expressed disbelief, asserting he could not do it, and Hashem responded by telling him that he had misunderstood, that He Himself would take care of it and that it was not Moshe's responsibility.

But this too is weak. Hashem's response is unequivocal: he scolds Moshe for doubting His power. Hazal recognize the problem here, and they comment that Moshe was forgiven for this lapse because it was private. The people did not witness his doubting of Hashem. In contrast, later on in Sefer BeMidbar, when Moshe hits the rock to draw water from it instead of speaking to it as commanded, he is punished severely, losing his opportunity enter the Land because his faith faltered in public, before the people (or because he fumbled an opportunity to strengthen the people's faith in Hashem through the great miracle).

Perhaps what is at issue here is not theology, but psychology. Moshe is not punished for doubting because he says what he says only out of despair. It is not his true belief. But he is so overwhelmed by his own failure to provide for the people that he begins to imagine that it is *impossible* to provide for them. Their needs are too great, their demands too high; he has encountered an insurmountable challenge and failed the people. That the challenge momentarily looms so large in his mind that even Hashem cannot meet it, is a stumbling which can surely be overlooked, considering the circumstances.

SUMMING UP:

Sefer BeMidbar turns in the middle of our parasha: the orderly administrative process is actualized when the camp begins to move, but things quickly change course for the worse. What begins as a trickle of complaint turns to hemorrhage, growing into a torrent that before the sefer is over will sweep away Moshe, Aharon, Miryam, and all of the members of the generation which left Egypt. They will all die in the desert. The two visions of the sefer, the destiny-starred vision of Moshe and the mundane, security-hungry vision of the meat-hungry people, clash in our parasha. At first, Moshe maintains a deep feeling of responsibility for the people. In coming weeks, however, we will see the people turn with increasing

aggressiveness against Moshe, and we will see Moshe's bitterness rise and his anger and disappointment grow.

[As an afterthought, see Bekhor Shor on why the firstborn lose their "job" as servants in the Mishkan (8:19). If you'd like to talk about his idea, drop a line.]

Shabbat Shalom

Parashat B'ha'alot'kha Rav Soloveitchik's Lecture on Leadership

Lecture given by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik zt"l on June 10, 1974

transcribed by Yitzchak Etshalom

[note: a section of this lecture can be found in "Reflections of the Rav", vol. 1, pp. 150-159. This presentation was transcribed from a tape-recording; any errors or unclarity should be ascribed to the transcriber. Please take into account that it is a straight transcription - the beauty of the oral presentation is diminished by the written format.]

This paper will deal with a problem which is quite acute now - as it was 3500 years ago - the problem of leadership. The paper won't be restricted to the Sidra of B'ha'alot'kha, which is one of the most difficult Sidrot in the entire Humash. The Sidra of B'ha'alot'kha is very puzzling. It is puzzling for two reasons. First, certain events described in the Sidra are incomprehensible. We simply cannot grasp the etiology of these events - nor their teleology.

For example, we do not understand the story about Miriam, her criticism and disapproval of Moshe. It is hard to grasp that Miriam, the devoted and loyal sister, who, as a little girl, stood alone on the shore of the Nile and watched the floating ark because she had faith and hope in the matter of her little brother (the baby in the ark) was concerned, while all adults, including his mother and father, resigned and abandoned the baby.

And his sister stood from afar, in order to know...

It is quite puzzling that this sister should suddenly turn into the accuser and prosecuting attorney of her great brother. Equally incomprehensible is the strictness, sadness and speed with which the Almighty meted out her punishment. Equally difficult to grasp is the connection between this episode and the tragedy which was recorded in the Torah earlier - the tragedy of "Kivrot haTa'avah" (the graves of the voluptuaries). This is one difficulty.

There is a second difficulty. Moshe went through many crises. He lived through many distressful experiences and moments. And worst of all, as you know, was the Egel (golden calf) experience, which threatened to terminate the very relationship between God and Israel. Yet, he never panicked, never complained, never acted out of black despair. On the contrary, steadfastly and heroically, he petitioned the Almighty for forgiveness; defending the people, arguing their case like an attorney in court. Our Rabbis describe this by way of a metaphor, commenting on the verse: Vay'chal Moshe. Vay'chal, in contradistinction to vay'vakesh or vayit'chanen Moshe, emphasizes the element of strength and boldness. There is bold prayer and there is humble prayer. Vay'chal has the connotation of bold prayer. In a strange, yet beautiful metaphor, Our Rabbis say:

Moshe seized the corner of the mantle of the Almighty, and said: "I will not let you loose unless you forgive the sin of the people."

Suddenly, in our Sidra, Moshe began to complain. When the multitude, began to rebel, Moshe, instead of defending the people, began to complain, almost accusing the people. He said things which he had never before uttered:

So Moshe said to YHVH,

"Why have you treated your servant so badly? Why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? I am not able to carry all this people alone, for they are too heavy for me. If this is the way you are going to treat me, put me to death at once if I have found favor in your sight and do not let me see my misery."

These are words which were never uttered by Moshe. It is true that he uttered a similar phrase when he was sent to Pharaoh on his first errand and his mission ended with complete failure. He came back to God and said:

YHVH, why have you mistreated this people? Why did you ever send me?

This was the question of a young, inexperienced man. But Moshe, the leader who took the people out of Egypt, never repeated the question. It is not Moshe-like to act like a frightened person and to speak out of the depths of resignation and to condemn the people. These are two examples of events which require interpretation to understand. We have to study Humash the way we study Gemara, to analyze and conceptualize the Humash and to find in every verse the meaning, the connotation and the principle.

However, the most difficult problem with B'ha'alot'kha is not limited to the substance of events as to the continuity of the Sidra. The lack of systematic development of the story which the Torah is trying to tell us is perplexing. The Torah is always careful about continuity and wholeness of the narrative. The Torah never tells us half a story. There is always development, transition, complete narration - when the Torah is finished with a story, the story is complete. As far as B'ha'alot'kha is concerned, we just don't know. We don't know how many stories there are in B'ha'alot'kha, how many stories are complete, how many are incomplete, we simply don't see the thread of continuity in B'ha'alot'kha.

Let us just simply review B'ha'alot'kha, the events which were recorded in the Sidra of B'ha'alot'kha. It commences with the Sanctification of the Levites (several verses were dedicated to the Menorah; Our Rabbis were right that B'ha'alot'kha et haNerot (the Mitzvah of the Menorah) actually belongs in Parashat Naso. That's what Rashi wanted to convey when he said: Aharon became upset) - "and you shall present them as an elevation offering".

Then the Torah tells us about Pesach Sheni - it is Pesach baShana haShenit (Pesach in the second year) and Pesach Sheni (the second Pesach). Halakhically, Pesach Sheni refers to the Pesach which is offered in Iyyar, by the one who is far away and the one who is impure (at the time of the first Pesach). But here the story is of the Pesach baShana haShenit and the Torah recorded the incident with the ritually impure people within the framework of the Pesach baShana haShenit. They approached Moshe,

why must we be kept from presenting YHVH's offering at its appointed time among the Israelites?;

Moshe inquired of the Almighty and the institution of Pesach Sheni was established.

Where is the transition from the Sanctification of the Levites to the Pesach baShana haShenit? We don't know. Two different stories? We have no continuous development.

Then, following the description of the Pesach baShana haShenit and Pesach Sheni, we have another description of the cloud, the pillar of cloud guiding the people on their journeys.

There is no transition from the story about the Pesach to the story about the pillar of cloud, and the Torah tells us in detail how the journeys of B'nei Yisrael are completely dependent upon the position of the pillar of cloud.

Whenever the cloud lifted from over the tent, then the Israelites would set out...

Following the narrative about the cloud, the Torah relates to us the commandment pertaining to Hatzotzrot- the two trumpets - and their use for assembling the community and the journeying of the camps. And the Torah describes almost in detail the signal system connected with the Hatzotzrot; one blast, so one camp moves, another blast, a different camp moves, the T'ruah, the T'ki'ah. At the conclusion of the section dealing with the Hatzotzrot, the Torah reviews the previous theme; the journeying of the camps, and again tells us in detail the order in which the camps traveled, Yehuda at the head, followed by Yissakhar and so forth. Then, after the Torah describes the organization of the camps and how they moved and traveled, suddenly we hear a very strange conversation which, prima facie, is puzzling and enigmatic. A conversation between Moshe and his father-in-law. Moshe, humbly extending an invitation to his father-in-law:

Moses said to Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which YHVH said, 'I will give it to you'; come with us, and we will treat you well; for YHVH has promised good to Israel." But he said to

him, "I will not go, but I will go back to my own land and to my kindred." He said, "Do not leave us, for you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us. Moreover, if you go with us, whatever good YHVH does for us, the same we will do for you.

Moshe argued with his father-in-law; he wanted his father-in-law to leave Midian and to join B'nei Yisrael, but Yitro was stubborn.

Following this conversation, we are suddenly confronted with a Parasha consisting of two Pesukim:

Vay'hi bin'soa ha'aron... - Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say, Arise, YHVH, let your enemies be scattered, and your foes flee before you." And whenever it came to rest, he would say, Return, YHVH of the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

At the beginning of the Parasha there is an inverted Nun and at the end of the Parasha there is an inverted Nun, in order to emphasize that this parasha is out of context here. Indeed it is out of context. And the question is obvious: if it is out of context, why did the Torah insert the Parasha into a section within which it would always stand out as out of context. The Parasha could have been beautifully inserted at the end of Pekudei:

For the cloud of YHVH was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, before the eyes of all the house of Israel at each stage of their journey.

The two Pesukim would have been a most appropriate conclusion or sequel to that:

Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say, Arise, YHVH, let your enemies be scattered, and your foes flee before you." And whenever it came to rest, he would say, Return, YHVH of the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

And finally, following the Parasha of Vay'hi bin'soa ha'aron..., the Torah tells us the tragic story - which we will analyze - of the Kivrot haTa'avah - the people who desired. They didn't do anything else, no crime, no idolatry, no murder, no sexual promiscuity, no robbery, no burglary - nothing, they just were overcome by a desire and they wept that's all - they didn't yell, they didn't throw stones at Moshe, like they did in other situations. Nothing, they didn't say anything, they weren't threatening anyone, just complaining. People of desire - this tragic story is told. The name Kivrot haTa'avah - could have been invented today, to characterize modern man. The grave of desire which man digs for himself, or I would rather say, the grave which the desire digs for man. The grave of the voluptuaries.

Finally, the conclusion of the Sidra is the story of Miriam.

We simply are perplexed. How many stories are in B'ha'alot'kha? One story or many stories? If there is one, there must be transition; if there is no transition, if there is no gradual and systematic development of a theme, then there is no unity. Whoever writes a composition paper, in first year English, knows that there must be unity. Unity is when a theme is developed. Prima facie, there is no development of anything and there is no literary unity. There are many stories. But each story per se is half a story, not a complete story. (Whatever I tell you tonight occurred to me during the Torah reading on Shabbat - it's completely new, so you won't find it anywhere - no one plagiarized me yet. I'm just reviewing my thoughts to you tonight, for the first time.) I had a feeling when the Ba'al Qeria (Torah reader) was reading the Sedra, as if we were jumping like a bee on a clear warm summer morning from flower to flower accumulating the sweet nectar. Is it possible that the principle of the unity of the Torah, the unity of the themes which the Torah develops was lost in Parashat B'ha'alot'kha? It is an impossibility.

Now let me move slowly - my job, you understand very well, is to restore the unity of the Parasha.

The Parasha is one story, one tragic story. A tragic story which changes Jewish history completely, from top to bottom. The inverted Nuns symbolize an inverted historical process here. An inverted Nun is not so bad. But when history is being inverted, not realized or stopped suddenly, this is very tragic. Our Rabbis speak about punishment in B'ha'alot'kha

as the worst distressful events in Jewish History, "In order to separate between one punishment and another punishment."

Let us start with the Exodus. When the Almighty charged Moshe with the assignment of redeeming the Jews, liberating them from Egypt, he told him the following: (He told him many things, but the Hinuch, R. Aharon haLevi (?), said that the necessary prerequisite of the Exodus is the following sentence:)

And it shall be your sign that it was I who sent you, when you will free the people from Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.

This is a difficult sentence. In other words, the Almighty told Moshe that the Exodus drama will culminate in two events:

you shall worship God on this mountain

How many events does this encompass? It means that the Exodus will not be consummated until you worship God at this mountain. What does He mean by this? What did Moshe understand by these words?

The Hinuch says: He meant two things: Mattan Torah the giving of the Law, the Torah teaches Man how to worship God, the continuous worship of God; the Man who lives according to the principles and rules of the Torah is a steady worshipper of God. There is no neutral moment; worship is a continuous process.

However, he meant something else, namely the construction of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). Certainly the purpose of the Mishkan is worship. As a matter of fact, the Torah was given at Mount Sinai and the Mishkan was constructed immediately after Moshe came down from the Mount, Betzalel started the work of constructing the Mishkan on the day after Moshe came down from Mount Sinai, assembled the people and told them that a Mishkan should be constructed. It's no wonder that following the Aseret haDibrot (Ten Statements, - "Ten Commandments") in Parashat Yitro, God mentioned to Moshe the construction of an altar:

But if you make for me an altar of stone...

If the Jews hadn't succumbed to the hysteria of the Erev Rav (multitudes), had they rejected the Egel, the two objectives would have been realized much sooner. Because of the Egel, the time schedule was changed and the consummation of the "you shall worship God on this mountain" was delayed for 80 days. If the Egel had not been made and the whole tragedy of the Egel had been avoided, Moshe would have come down on Tamuz 17 and immediately they would have started to construct the Mishkan. Because of the Egel, Moshe had to spend 80 more days on Mount Sinai in prayer. Moshe came down from Mount Sinai on the day following Yom HaKippurim -so the construction of the Mishkan was delayed for 80 days. However, on the day after Yom HaKippurim, after Moshe came down with the second set of Tablets and the message of forgiveness, he quickly assembled the congregation and told them about the immediate task to be discharged - the building of the Beit HaMikdash. The work of construction began immediately. How long did it take them to construct the Mishkan, to complete the work? The Mishkan was completed and put together on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, which was, according to Our Rabbis, the Shemini laMilu'im - (eighth day of the Milu'im - handing over the priesthood to Aharon) - the day on which the princes began to offer their gifts to the Beit HaMikdash. When those two objectives, Mattan Tora and the construction of the Beit HaMikdash, were achieved, the Geula found its realization. The "you shall worship God on this mountain" was translated into reality, into fact.

The people, therefore, had no business prolonging their stay in Midbar Sinai (the Wilderness of Sinai). They stayed in Midbar Sinai as long as it was necessary to receive the Torah - which had to happen twice, due to the Egel, and as long as it was necessary in order to complete the work on the Beit HaMikdash, because both are encompassed by the commandment: But the very moment that the second set of tablets were delivered to Yisrael and the Beit HaMikdash was constructed and completed, the vessels erected and the sacrifices offered, the task of Yisrael in Midbar Sinai was discharged and fulfilled. There was no purpose in extending the sojourn any longer.

The Torah in Naso tells us about the final act of the dedication of the Mishkan, namely, the sacrifices by the princes. The Torah did not forget to mention a secondary matter, like the sanctification of the Levi'im. The Torah apprises us in Tzav about the sanctification of the Kohanim, which was of primary significance. In a word, with the dedication of the Mishkan by the princes and the election of the Levi'im, everything which was necessary in order to have the Mishkan serve the great purpose of worship was prepared and ready; the work was completed. When could B'nei Yisrael simply get up and leave Midbar Sinai? The Mishkan was completed on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the twelve princes offered their gifts, the Almighty said:

They shall present their offerings, one leader each day, for the dedication of the altar...

meaning Rosh Chodesh Nissan plus 12 days. They were ready to march on the 13th of Nissan. However, the cloud did not move or rise, because the next day was Erev Pesach, the Korban Pesach, so the march was postponed until after Pesach. Everybody knew that the stay of the Jews in the wilderness of Sinai came to a close; the job was done; the Beit HaMikdash built, the Torah given, now we have to resume our march. However, the march had to wait until after the Jews offered the Korban Pesach. The second Pesach they celebrated in Midbar Sinai:

YHVH spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: Let the Israelites keep the passover at its appointed time.

(The Almighty said:) "I will postpone the journey until after the Korban Pesach will be offered."

So the Torah told us about the Korban Pesach in B'ha'alot'kha, because the Korban Pesach was the only obstacle to the resumption of the march. During the offering of the Pesach, the ritually impure men inquired about their status, Moshe Rabbenu asked the Almighty and the institution of Pesach Sheni was introduced for those who were unable to offer the Pesach in Nissan. It is perfect continuity: The sanctification of the Levi'im was the last act of "you shall worship God on this mountain." It was not as important as the sanctification of the Kohanim, which is why the Torah tells us about the sanctification of the Kohanim in Tzav and Tetzaveh. The sanctification of the Levi'im is not as important; you could operate the Beit HaMikdash without the Levi'im. Shira (the main function of the Levi'im) is not indispensable; the Levi'im are more or less a luxury. The Torah tells us that every detail was completed, we were ready to march, the Almighty told Moshe to offer the Pesach first in Midbar Sinai and after the Pesach was offered, the B'nei Yisrael were supposed to resume their march. In a word, I repeat, the two prerequisites for moving on were met: the Torah given and accepted and the Mishkan ready for worship. The great march was supposed to start; the march to Eretz Yisrael.

All 4 freedoms were attained, "I will take out...I will save...I will redeem...", and with Mattan Torah and the construction of the Mikdash, the "I will take..." was realized as well. The hour was struck for the fifth freedom to be realized and be translated into a reality, namely "I will bring (you into the land...)". Now, how long was the march supposed to last? Several days. That's why the Torah reveals to us the details of the march. First, who was the guide, the leader? If you march towards a certain destination, particularly in the desert, you need a leader. The answer is the pillar of cloud- as an instrument in the hands of the Almighty. The guide was the Almighty as the Torah told us in B'shallach: YHVH went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night.

Now the Torah tells us how the camps were arranged marching, which tribes formed the avant garde and which tribes formed the rear guard: M'asef lekhol haMachanot. The Torah speaks of Tziv'otam (hosts) of warriors: Kol Yotz'ei Tzava. The Torah also relates to us the story of the two Hatzotzrot in this context because it's very important, the story of the signal system. Since Moshe was the commander he instructed the various camps on their march to the promised land, so there was need for communication. And the means of communication were the two silver trumpets, the Hatzotzrot of silver.

Torah is not only important to explain intellectually in categories, but also in emotional categories. If you want to understand the beauty and greatness of the Torah, the emotional mood which is created by the reading of the Torah is perhaps more important than the intellectual gesture. Read B'ha'alot'kha carefully,

So they set out from the mount of YHVH three days' journey with the ark of the covenant of YHVH going before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting place for them,

and

When both are blown, the whole congregation shall assemble before you at the entrance of the tent of meeting. But if only one is blown, then the leaders, the heads of the tribes of Israel, shall assemble before you. When you blow a T'ruah, the camps on the east side shall set out; when you blow a second T'ruah, the camps on the south side shall set out. A T'ruah is to be blown whenever they are to set out.

There is a mood of expectancy and tension. Expectancy permeates the pages of B'ha'alot'kha. There is a mood of mobilization and rigid order in the air. All conditions were met, the reward is about to be granted, finally the promise to Abraham is about to be fulfilled. The "I will bring them" will become the fifth freedom. The people are on their final triumphal march. In this mood, Moshe was excited. He was expecting great things. There is tenseness in the air and there is determination and boldness to break through if necessary.

Interesting is the conversation between Moshe and his father-in-law. What kind of mood on the part of Moshe is mirrored or reflected by this conversation? We get a glimpse into Moshe, into his mood, those days, after the second Passover as the people started to march.

In the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, the cloud lifted from over the tabernacle of the covenant. Then the Israelites set out by stages...

It was not one of the many journeys; it was the journey, the final journey.

What is the emotional climate of this conversation:

Moses said to Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which YHVH said, 'I will give it to you'; come with us, and we will treat you well; for YHVH has promised good to Israel."

It is a climate of serenity, of peace of mind, an unqualified assurance. Moshe spoke of the final journey to the promised land. No waiting anymore, no Ani Ma'amin - I believe in the coming of Mashiach, even if he may tarry, I will wait for him... There would be no need for it anymore. No delays, no procrastination, no if and no when: Im Shamo'a Tishm'u - If you will listen - It is now! It is going to happen right now, not tomorrow. It is present tense, not "We will set out" - rather, "We are setting out"

...for the place of which YHVH said, 'I will give it to you'; come with us, and we will treat you well; for YHVH has promised good to Israel.

all the promises will be fulfilled. I won't have to ask questions

YHVH, why have you mistreated this people? Why did you ever send me? Ever since I came to Pharaoh...

no problems, no questions, no doubts, nothing! It will be very simple.

I want to let you in on another secret. It was not an invitation which a son-in-law extended to his father-in-law. It was not an invitation extended by an individual to another human being to share the good things in life. It was more than that. It

was an invitation extended by Moshe, as a representative of Klal Yisrael to all Gerim of all generations. The Midrash in Kohelet says:

All of the rivers flow into the sea and the sea is never filled" - these are the Gerim who come to Eretz Yisrael to convert.

It was extended to the entire non-Jewish world: Join us! Join us in the promised land - provided that the non-Jew is ready to subject himself to the same Divine discipline as we did. Any human being was offered the opportunity to join the march to the promised land, the march to the Messianic era. If that march had been realized, the coming of Mashiach would have taken place then and Moshe would have been the Melekh haMashiach. It was quite optional - the Jews could have reached it, they lost it so Moshe is not the Melekh haMashiach and the distance between them in time is long and far. The Torah was given to us. Eretz Yisrael was given to us, certainly. However, we were told to pass on God's word to mankind as such. We all know the famous verse in Shofarot of Rosh HaShana:

All you inhabitants of the world, you who live on the earth, when a signal is raised on the mountains, look! When a trumpet is blown, listen!

We are all invited - all the dwellers on this world.

We are setting out for the place of which YHVH said, 'I will give it to you'; come with us, and we will treat you well...

What does Moshe think? That Yitro, the non-Jew, is dependent upon us? Our Torah is commodious enough to encompass the entire world.

There is enough Hessed, goodness and happiness in the Torah to be transmitted to others and to be shared by others. Join our triumphal march, Moshe said to Yitro, towards our destiny. It may become your destiny as well. When I read this Parasha, it attracts me; there is something moving, touching. Sometimes I want to cry when I read this Parasha. The simplicity with which the great Moshe, the master of all wise men and the father of all prophets speaks. He uses the grammatical first person:

We are setting out...come with us, and we will treat you well...whatever good YHVH does for us...

What does it mean? Moshe was certain - there was not even a shadow of doubt in his mind - that he was going to enter the promised land. He and the entire congregation will be classified as both Yotz'ei Mitzrayim (departers from Egypt) and Ba'ei ha'Aretz (those who come into the Land). He was sure, he was convinced that he would see the beautiful land, the hills of Judea, the prairie land of the Sharon Valley, he was certain that he will climb the mount of Lebanon. Later he prayed, but his prayer did not come true:

...Let me cross over to see the good land beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and the Lebanon.

But that time he felt no need for prayer: there was no doubt about his destiny.

The whole operation, if successfully brought to a close would have lasted several days. And at that time there was no need for Meraglim, for scouts to explore the land, to see whether the land is good or bad, or to see whether the cities are surrounded by walls or they are open cities, what kind of population is there - strong, weak, a sickly population or a healthy population. There was no need for it, all those scouts and all the exploration and intelligence work is only necessary if a man has doubts. This was the pre-doubt period in Jewish history.

We are setting out for the place of which YHVH said, 'I will give it to you'; come with us, and we will treat you well...

Share with us! An open invitation to everybody. Yitro or no Yitro, father-in-law of Moshe or the stranger. The Torah tells us indeed,

And they journeyed from the mount of the Eternal three days journey, and the Ark of the Covenant went before them in the three days journey to seek out a Menucha (resting place) for them,

Where did it go? Where is Menucha for the Jews? What was the destination? Rashi, quoting Sifri, says:

A distance of three days journey they miraculously traveled in one day, because the Almighty wanted to bring them into Eretz Yisrael.

My dear friends, tell me, at that time, before the great reversal took place, was the Parasha of Vay'hi bin'soa' ha'aron in its proper place or out of context? Before the Jews alienated God, before they fell from Him and they needed the Meraglim as scouts and they had doubts. Before, every Jew was convinced: This is the final consummation of all hope. It was beautiful, the Torah tells us:

And they journeyed from the mount of the Eternal three days journey, and the Ark of the Covenant went before them in the three days journey to seek out a Menucha (resting place) for them, the cloud of YHVH being over them by day when they set out from the camp. (meaning security on all sides)

Vay'hi Binsoa' ha'aron - Whenever the ark set out (leading them right into Eretz Yisrael) Moses would say, "Arise, YHVH, let your enemies be scattered, and your foes flee before you."

Who were the enemies? The last war they fought was the war against Amaleq and the next war was against Sichon and Og, 40 years later. Why was Moshe speaking about enemies and fiends and people who threatened them? Who did Moshe have in mind? We are traveling fast to Eretz Yisrael - there we will be confronted by somebody, if the great hope had been realized, there would have been no need to engage in battle for seven years.

Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say, Arise, YHVH, let your enemies be scattered, and your foes flee before you." And whenever it came to rest, he would say, Return, YHVH of the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

It was not misplaced. It was the continuation of the great story of the final, triumphal Messianic march into Eretz Yisrael, which was supposed to take place approximately 3500 years ago.

It was certainly in its place and there was no need for an inverted Nun at the beginning and for an inverted Nun at the end, it would have been the climax of the whole story. Had this come true, nothing had happened, the whole Jewish history would have taken a different turn. According to our tradition, (Hazzal said it many times) had Moshe entered Eretz Yisrael, it never would have been taken from us - because Moshe would have been crowned as Melekh haMashiach. The Messianic era would have commenced with the conquest of Eretz Yisrael by Moshe. Moshe believed with a great passion and love that the final march of redemption had begun - it was only a question of days.

Suddenly, something happened. Neither Moshe nor anybody else expected the event to transpire. What happened? In the story of the Egel, we know what happened. Concerning the Meraglim (spies) we know what happened. About Pe'or in Midian, 40 years later, we know what happened. What happened here? [Seemingly] nothing in particular.

And the multitude that was among them felt a lust, had a desire. And B'nei Yisrael wept again and they said: Who shall give us flesh to eat?

And the Torah tells us that this seizure by desire was evil. It aroused the wrath of the Almighty and also Moshe resented it. Uv'einei Moshe ra' - In Moshe's eyes it was evil - first time in Jewish history. Moshe was not the defense attorney: it was evil. This interrupted the great march. - it has brought the march to an end. The vision of Mashiach, of Eretz Yisrael, of the redemption of Yisrael, became a distant one, like a distant star on a mysterious horizon. It twinkled, but the road suddenly became almost endless. Why did Moshe feel discouraged? Why didn't he offer prayers for the people as was his practice in past situations?

Because the incident of Kivrot haTa'avah differed greatly from that of the Egel. The making of the Egel was the result of great primitive fright. The people thought that Moshe was died, they were afraid of the desert, they did not know what the future held in store for them, they were simply overwhelmed by a feeling of loneliness and terror, consequently, they violated the precept of Avodah Zarah. There were mitigating circumstances - they wanted the golden calf to substitute for Moshe, as all the Rishonim (medieval commentators) say.

When you speak about Avodah Zarah (idolatry), you have to distinguish between Avodah Zarah as a ceremony/ ritual and between the pagan way of life. In Hazal's opinion, an Avodah Zarah-worshipper will also adopt the pagan way of life. But in this day and age, we know that it's possible for people to live like pagans even though no idolatry is involved. Paganism is not the worship of an idol, it encompasses more - a certain style of life. What is the pagan way of life, in contradistinction to the Torah way of life? The pagan cries for variety for boundlessness for unlimited lust and insatiable desire, the demonic dream of total conquest, of drinking the cup of pleasure to its dregs. The pagan way of life is the very antithesis of Yahadut, which demands limitedness of enjoyment and the ability to step backwards if necessary, the ability to withdraw - to retreat. The unlimited desire, which the Greeks call hedone, is the worst desire in Man. When Man reaches out for the unreachable, for the orgiastic and hypnotic, then they don't violate the prohibition of Avodah Zarah, but they adopt the pagan way of life; and the Torah hated the pagan way of life more than it hated the idol. Because an idol cannot exist for a long time, it cannot last. Finally, an intelligent person realizes that it is just wood and metal; it has no life. Avodah Zarah per se is short-lived, however the pagan way of life has a tremendous attraction for people. The Torah describes so beautifully the way in which the pagan gathers, accumulates property - gathers the Slav, the quail, how he gathers property, means of gratification for his hungry senses.

So the people worked all that day and night and all the next day, gathering the quails; the least anyone gathered was ten homers; and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp.

They were mad with desire, there was no controlling/limiting element in their desire for vastness, the imagination excited them and their good sense was surrounded with a nimbus which was irresistible, "the more, the better, and you start gathering new goods even before you have completed gathering the other goods." The pagan is impatient and insatiable. That's what the Torah describes in Kivrot haTa'avah.

There's another story in the Torah which, in contradistinction to the unlimited desire of the pagan, the Torah describes the Jewish way of life. It's interesting - it's the Manna. And Moshe said to them: this is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat, gather as much of it as each of you requires to eat, an omer to a person, for as many as you as there are. But when they measure it, by the omer, he who gathered much had no excess and he who gathered little had no deficiency. This is the approach of Yahadut.

The great tragedy happened, the great triumphal final march suddenly came to a stop, the people who rejected the basic principle of economic limitedness and aesthetic enjoyment, these people were not worthy to enter the Land. Suddenly, parashat Vay'hi binsoa' ha'aron found itself dislocated. The distance to that land suddenly became very long. Of course, there was no edict yet concerning the 40 years, the time the people would have to spend in the desert, but Moshe felt intuitively that the great march had come to an end. Hopes he had will be unfulfilled and visions he had will not be realized and his prayers will be rejected. He knew that.

I tell you frankly, I don't have to say Moshe, Moshe was the master of the prophets, God revealed everything to him. I remember from my own experience, during the illness of my wife, who was sick for four years. Of course, I am a realist, and it is very hard to fool me - not even doctors can fool me. But, somehow I was convinced that somehow she would manage to get out of it. And I lived with hope and tremendous unlimited faith. I remember, it was the last Yom Kippur before she died. It was Kol Nidrei and I was holding a Sefer Torah for Kol Nidrei and when the Hazzan finished Kol Nidrei and said Shehech'yanu veqiy'manu vehigi'anu laz'man hazeh I turned over the Sefer Torah to a Talmid of mine and told him to put it in the Aron Kodesh. He put it in the Aron Kodesh, apparently he didn't place it well, I don't know what, but the Sefer Torah slipped and fell, not on the floor, but in the Aron Kodesh. At that time I was filled - don't ask me how or why - I felt a gefil - nothing will help. And indeed it was.

When the Am haMit'avim (the people who had the craving) began to complain and to weep, Moshe knew: This is the end, he'll never see Eretz Yisrael, never! That's why he said:

If this is the way you are going to treat me, put me to death at once...and do not let me see my misery.

And how beautifully our Rabbis said:

"Eldad and Meidad were having prophecy in the camp" What did they say? What was the excitement about? They said just one short sentence: Moshe's hopes: "We are setting out...come with us, and we will treat you well..." will never come true Moshe will die - he'll be buried in the sand dunes in the desert - he'll never see the beautiful land and the Levanon - Moshe meit viY'hoshua makhnis Moshe will die and Yehoshua will lead [the people] in to the Land.

And then parashat Vay'hi binsoa' ha'aron lost its place - it was dislocated and displaced. Do you know why it was dislocated and displaced? Because two little Nuns were inverted - the march was inverted. Instead of the march bringing them closer to Eretz Yisrael, the march took them away from Eretz Yisrael. Binsoa' ha'aron the Nun was inverted and with the inversion of the Nun, Jewish history became inverted- and it is still inverted. The Parasha is still "dislocated". We cannot say "we are setting forth" with the same assurance and certitude that Moshe said it to Yitro his father-in-law just 24 hours before the Mit'avim inverted the Jewish process of redemption.

Finally, is now the continuation of the Parasha - I didn't yet explain the problem of Miriam, which I will now explain. The Torah describes the Exodus, Mattan Torah in Parashat Yitro, the construction of the Mikdash in Parashat Teruma. Suddenly, something happened which interrupted the continuity - the Egel, the construction was delayed for a certain number of days. Sefer Vayyikra (Leviticus) is devoted completely to the worship, to "you shall worship God on this mountain."

In Sefer Bamidbar (Numbers) the Torah tells us about the last act of dedication by the princes, and the lighting of the candles, and the sanctification of the Levi'im, so "you shall worship God on this mountain" was attained, the two objectives were reached, now the march began. The Torah tells us how the Jews were marching on the final triumphal march on the final triumphal journey to Eretz Yisrael, the pillar of cloud covered them, protected them, shielded them it was in front and was also the rear guard protecting them in back, and then how Moshe communicated with the camps, the Hatzotzrot of silver, and Moshe's conversation with Yitro, he already had Eretz Yisrael within his reach, he extended the generous invitation to mankind, to share in our Ge'ulah - our redemption, and everything was ready. Vay'hi Bin'soa' ha'aron - it should take us just a few more days. During the last few days, something happened - disaster struck. That disaster inverted Jewish History and that disaster dislocated Parashat Vay'hi Bin'soa' ha'aron. And that disaster inverted the march - instead of marching to Eretz Yisrael, we began to march away from Eretz Yisrael. Moshe discovered something else - he realized something else. He knew pretty well that he was chosen as the teacher of Klal Yisrael. God did not elect him as a diplomat, as a negotiator, but as the teacher or the Rebbe of the people, as their spiritual and moral leader. God Himself told him, when Moshe asked: "Who am I, that I should go to Phar'ao?" He said: "you shall worship God on this mountain".

Basically, "Moshe, had I been looking for a negotiator, I wouldn't have selected you. But I'm not looking for a negotiator - I can do the art of negotiating by myself. I need a teacher for my people - as a teacher, you yourself will agree that you are the best one - you are a teacher par excellence. And that's why I selected you: 'And it shall be your sign' - and that is the reason 'that it was I who sent you'; that I selected you and not somebody else (this is how the Sefer haHinukh understands it)." There were many people in Egypt who were qualified to be negotiators; because the purpose of the Exodus is not political freedom, but the conversion of a slave society into a Kingdom of Kohanim and a holy nation. And for that you are wonderful. Moshe knew this. However, he did not expect, until the Mit'avim, that he would assume the role of a teacher, but of a nursing mother/father - an Omein.

What is an Omein?- it is a nursing mother or father. Of course, a nursing mother teaches the baby. Perhaps the mother is the best and most important teacher in the life of a baby. But she does something else - the Rebbe teaches the talmidim. The nursing mother, in addition to teaching, carries the baby in her bosom or in her arms. "...as a nurse carries a sucking child,". What does this mean? Usually the father doesn't do it, the mother does it. The father has no patience for that. It has more meaning than the literal meaning of the word. The teacher does teach his disciple, but the disciple very seldom becomes a part of him. When the mother teaches the baby, the baby becomes a part of her. The mother, when she rears the baby, has one calling, one purpose, to protect the baby. The Omein or the mother basically do not belong to themselves. Many may be very critical of my statement but this is true according to Yahadut. A mother has no life of her own. She belongs to the infant. At least as long as the infant is helpless and is exposed to the dangers of a hostile environment. She belongs to the infant.

Moshe discovered now that teaching is not enough for a leader of Yisrael. A teacher, no matter how devoted, has a life of his own. That his job is nursing, carrying the baby in his arms, watching every step, guessing the baby's needs (a baby cannot say what she wants, you have to guess) feeling pain when the baby cries and being happy when the baby is cheerful. Teaching or instructing her good performances, but that is not everything. Moshe, who reconciled with his role as a teacher and leader of adults, began to doubt his ability to play the role of an Omein or mother nurse. Listen to his words: Did I conceive all these people, did I bear them, that you say to me: Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries an infant? Moshe discovered something tragic in a mother's life. That from now on, as an individual, he has no rights at all, no right to rejoice, whenever God will be good to him. As a private person, he is not entitled to enjoy life as an individual, to be happy in an ordinary way, like any other human being, because his children will never belong to Moshe. He lost his family. He became the mother nurse of K'lal Yisrael, no family of his own.

This is what our Rabbis say: "he separated himself from his wife." It isn't just his wife from whom he separated, it's the wife and children (two lovely boys), his sister, his brother. He could not share his joy with them, they could not share their joy with him, he is the father of Yisrael, the father of K'lal Yisrael, and that is what he means: the role of "as a nurse carries a sucking child" was imposed upon him during the rebellion of the Mit'onenim. He separated himself, not only from his mate, but also from his children. Where are Moshe's children? Do we ever come across Moshe's children? There was a census taken in the desert the beginning of the 40 years and at the end of the 40 years. Are Moshe's children mentioned? Not once.

This is the lineage of Aaron and Moses...These are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar;

Where are Moshe's children? Moshe didn't have children. And it is later, in T'nakh, the name of Moshe's child was mentioned, not as the son of Moshe, but the son of "Menasheh". Why was a little Nun added to the name? Not only in order to reflect unfavorably upon Moshe - this is ridiculous, Moshe was not responsible for what happened, but because Moshe did not have children. I always say that if Moshe had a child, then according to the law he would have been in a most awful dilemma. According to the law, it would have been required of him to give preference to his child, as far as the study of Torah is concerned, over the child of his next-door neighbor. This is a law which Moshe Rabbenu taught us:

Your own son takes precedence (in teaching Torah) over the son of your fellow.

On the other hand, Moshe had no right to give any preference, or to give an additional second to his son, because he was the father of every child within the Jewish community. So Moshe lost his children. He became the Omein, the nursing mother, of K'lal Yisrael.

And that is exactly what God told him at the time of Mattan Torah:
You say to them, return to your tents, to your private lives, but you, stay here.

Moshe realized it during the incident of the Mit'onenim. And that is what Miriam, the true, loyal sister, resented. Does prophecy require of Man alienation of his family? Does God require of the prophet that he should forget his sister and brother, his children and wife, and dedicate himself only to the people?

...Has he not spoken through us also?

And we live a beautiful life with our husbands and children and relatives. And it doesn't interfere with our devotion to the people. That's exactly what God resented and told her: There is a difference between you and Moshe. An ordinary prophet does not have to sacrifice his private interest, his selfish concern, his family, his father, mother children, brother, sister; he can be a prophet, communicate with God, and at the same time be a devoted father, a loving brother, and a helpful head of the family. "Not so my servant Moshe." He's consecrated fully and wholly to me. And that's how the Parasha of B'haalot'kha concludes its long story - it's one story, this story - of a great march which could have led us into the Messianic era,

On that day, God will be one and His Name one.

but which was interrupted by some multitude which was permissive, hedones.

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