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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 more than 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his 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 archives.

Because we are traveling starting very early on Thursday, I had to prepare my Devrei Torah very early this week. Normally I use this space for an introduction and thoughts on the parsha. This week, instead I am attaching a three page introduction to Behaalotecha that I prepared last August for a program in memory of Avi West, a noted Judaic educator from Silver Spring, MD who passed away in 2021. This attachment, which went through numerous drafts, is the first attachment to my E-mail. It is considerably more polished than what I usually write in this space.

Behaalotecha marks a transition (in the sixth alleyah) from the excited, positive anticipation that B'Nai Yisrael felt when leaving the base of Har Sinai to the almost completely negative depression that almost immediately took over. In three portions, we read of three disasters, all of which occurred in a single week, that doomed the generation of the Exodus to death in the Midbar, with almost none of the adults surviving to enter the land.

We Jews must be ready to switch moods rapidly as events go from positive to negative and back, sometimes several times in a single day. Our enemies attack and kill Israelis near a border (the latest near Gaza) while Israel discovers a huge field of natural gas entirely in Israeli property in the Mediterranean Sea. Anti-Semitic attacks continue in many locations around the world while the King of Morocco invites a leader of the Israeli Parliment to address the people and government of this country – a first among Moslem countries. We must look to the Hand of God in events, both in the world and in our lives. Some of these events are very positive while others are tragic. For the generation of the Exodus, the good news is that God released them from slavery in Egypt and brought them close to the promise that He had made to our Avot – a promise that their children would experience first hand. Caleb and Yehoshua live on to show the reward of ridding themselves of the remnants of a slave personality – something that more of the adults of the Exodus generation could have experienced if they had been ready.

When I was young, fresh out of college, my professors always taught that one could never prove either the existence or non-existence of God. I asked my beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, how one develops belief in God. He answered that one should look to the world, see the amazing qualities of life and nature, and realize that this world could not have arisen by chance. Rabbi David Fohrman has gone through the long series of events that would all be necessary to have a "big bang" lead to a world with life. One minute change in any of these factors, and the planets would fall into a black hole, the planets would speed away or speed up to crash into the sun, or any of several other events would have prevented a universe such as ours from arising. (I have summarized the arguments in these pages in the past.)

It is our obligation to explain the scientific basis for belief in God to our children and grandchildren. It is our responsibility to do our part to work with God to make this world better for our generation and for those yet to come. (Of course, people may differ on what actions will make the world a better place and which will make things worse.)

Shabbat Shalom,

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

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Arye Don ben Tzivia, Reuven ben Basha Chaya Zlata Lana, Yoram Ben Shoshana, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Asher Shlomo ben Ettie, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Sharon bat Sarah, Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, who need our prayers. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah & Alan

The Importance of Being Humble

by Matthew Berkowitz
Director of Israel Programs, JTS © 2013

An unfortunate incident mars the otherwise solid familial bond between Moses and his siblings in Parashat Beha'alotekha. While in Hazerot, Aaron and Miriam engage in disparaging talk about their brother's marriage to a Cushite woman. Jealousy sparks their venom as they malign their brother and declare, "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Has God not spoken through us as well?" (Num. 12:2). To Aaron and Miriam's dismay, God "hears" their provocative words, holds them accountable, and punishes Miriam with a plague of leprosy. In the midst of this troubling episode, we receive a striking description of Moses and the depth of his relationship with God: "Now Moses was a very humble man, more so than any other man on earth" (Num. 12:3). God continues, "With him I speak mouth to mouth, plainly and not in riddles, and he beholds the likeness of the Lord" (Num. 12:8). What is the import of such a qualification of Moses and his intimate relationship with God? How may we better understand Moses's essence?

Yeshayahu Leibowitz writes,

> *No place in Torah does it state that Moses was wiser than any man, nor does it say that he was more righteous than any man, nor does it say that he was mightier than any man, even though we can deduce from events that he was wise, with the greatest comprehension of any man and that he was righteous and mighty. But the Torah finds it proper to stress only one thing: that Moses was more humble than any other man . . . Humility without any doubt, is a high level of human perfection. Human nature is such that each person considers himself to be great and important—if not consciously, at least subconsciously. In other words, it is not natural for a person to be humble . . . It is only one who attains the level of Moses, and who really "understands and knows God," that really realizes that no man can understand and know God. He attains the truest and greatest humility. (Accepting the Yoke of Heaven,* 134–135)

To be humble, as Leibowitz explains, is to strive for the one of the highest levels of "human perfection." Pridefulness too often becomes a stumbling block in the pursuit of power. Learning to become humble allows one to internalize the discipline of self-contraction, and in so doing, makes space for the wisdom and inspiration of others. Each of us contains only part of an eternal Truth. By Moses's modeling what it is to be humble and the Torah's keen emphasis on this quality, we are encouraged to strive to emulate one of the great leaders of the Israelites and the Jewish People.

Behaaloscha – Leadership

By Rabbi Label Lam © 5768

> *It was in the second year, in the second month on the twentieth of the month, the cloud was lifted from the Tabernacle of the Testimonies. The Children of Israel embarked on their journeys from the Wilderness of Sinai, and the cloud rested in the Wilderness of Paran. They embarked for the first time at the bidding of HASHEM though Moshe. The banner of the camp of the children of Judah embarked first according to their legions, and over his legion was Nachshon ben Aminadav. Over the legions of the tribe of the children of Issachar was Nethanel son of Zuar. And over the legion of the tribe of the children of Zevulun was Eliab son of Helon. The Tabernacle was dismantled and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari embarked, the bearers of the Tabernacle embarked.* (Bamidbar 10:11-17)
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> *The Tabernacle was dismantled: When the banner of Judah moved Aaron and his children entered and disassembled the Curtains and covered the Holy Ark…And the children of Gershon and Merari dismantled the Tabernacle and loaded it on wagons…* (Rashi)

On the one had we are told about the collective travels of the entire congregation as a coordinated unit and then we are treated to a lengthy description about who and what went first and then second and what triggered the initial move. Would it not have been more harmonious if everyone simultaneously and spontaneously jumped into action?

Many stories are told about the hostile and fragile relationships between Jews and the porritz – landlord in feudal Europe. In a certain district populated with many Jewish families the economy was beginning to slump. The local porritz had already started to pressure Moshe, who had a large family for delinquency in paying the rent. He begged for extension after extension. The porritz lost his patience. He demanded that Moshe pay his rent by the next week or face beatings and jail-time. Moshe was frightened. He tried to scrape the money together. Time was running out. He had no choice but to gather his family, a few possessions and flee. On his way out of the village on the only road to the big city Moshe meets the porritz. *"Where do you think you're going?"* he asks. Moshe calmly informs him that he is headed to the big city. The porritz demands to know the reason for the journey. Moshe tells him that it is a Jewish holiday. The porritz questions Moshe suspiciously, *"I'm working with Jews my whole life and I know of no holiday at this time of the year!"* Moshe confidently informs the porritz, *"This is a holiday known as "Z'man Pleitaseinu."* Bedazzled, the porritz proceeds to the village. There he sees all the Jews going about their business. The porritz asks one man, *"Isn't tonight a Jewish Holiday?"* The fellow laughs, *"What holiday!?*" The porritz tells him, *"I just saw Moshe and his whole family heading to the big city. He said that tonight is a Jewish Holiday- uhhhh Z'man Pleitaseinu!"* The fellow sighs and explains to the porritz. *"Z'man Pleitaseinu" (the time of our escape) is a different type of holiday. Everyone keeps it at a different time. Today is Moshe's day and soon we will all have our turn to celebrate."*

It's no mistake that Nachshon the son of Aminadav, who was the first to enter the sea when it was about to split, is found at the head once again. Not everything that Jews do is Judaism. There was a heavenly signal and someone had to make an appropriate response. That set a whole chain reaction in motion. That sensitivity to the presence and sudden absence of a cloud and the good sense to know where to move to next is an intangible quality called leadership.

Good Shabbos!

https://torah.org/torah-portion/dvartorah-5768-behaaloscha/

Behaalotecha: Traveling Forth with the Aron Semikha

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2011, 2015

Reprinted from 2011 and dedicated in honor of the 2018 semikha class of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah and our amazing new rabbis traveling forth to serve Klal Yisrael!

As the academic year ends, many of us will be beginning new chapters in our lives. High school students preparing to go to Israel or college; College students preparing to enter into the job world; men and women becoming lawyers, doctors, scientists, professors; and rabbinical students becoming rabbis. The Torah as well, in this coming week's sidra, introduces a new parsha. *"And it was when the ark moved forth, and Moshe declared"* – this tiny section, these two verses, are – according to the Gemara Shabbat, a book of the Torah in its own right, so that what comes after it is a different book, an entirely different parsha, of the Torah. In what way is this so?

Until this moment, in the Torah's narrative, time has been held in suspension. The Children of Israel had received the Torah, but they had not yet brought the Torah into their lives. That had organized a camp around the Mishkan, but they had yet to leave Mount Sinai. Now, it is relatively easy to construct a perfect system, with Torah and mitzvot, with God in the center, as long as one is in the desert. The true challenge is how does one leave Har Sinai, how does one move forward with the aron, how does one take the Torah and make one's way towards the Promised Land?

When we transition from a secure and familiar reality, when the camp shifts from a stable square to a shaky line, we become vulnerable, we can become fragmented, we can lose our way. In the new book, the one that begins after the aron moves, problems abound: The people complain, they grumble. Things are not as familiar, not as comfortable. Some will use the opportunity to leave altogether – departing from Mount Sinai as a child who runs as far away from school as possible the moment that school lets out. Others will want to go back to an imagined past, when everything was – at least in their minds – perfect and predictable – *"We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt from free. Oh, how wonderful things were back in Egypt!"* So this new parsha has its dangers. But to stay in the previous parsha, to stay encamped at Mount Sinai, is to keep the Torah in the desert, to never enter the Promised Land.

There are times when we are where we need to be, when we should stop moving, when we should build and strengthen our camp. *"On the word of God they would encamp."* And, indeed, for many centuries we had indeed been in the Promised Land, encamped around the Temple. But when change came, when the Temple was destroyed, we were ready to move forward. *"On the word of God they would travel forth"*– we were able to reinvent ourselves, and to shift our focus from Temple to Torah.

Since that time we have been encamped in another stable reality – in a pre-Modernity, galut Judaism. When change came this time, when our reality was shaken – were we ready to move forward? When Modernity and the haskalah presented compelling alternate views of the world, when they posited epistemological assumptions and value-systems that were at odds with those of tradition – did we rise to the challenge or did we build our walls higher? When the Holocaust destroyed a third of our people and wiped out European Jewry, when it raised the most profound questions about God as a God of history – did we begin to think theologically or did we once again say that halakha will answer all of our religious questions? When post-modernism raised questions about any and all truth-claims, and when feminism raised profound questions about power, equality, and morality – did we also struggle with these, or did we continue to live in an imagined, romantic past? When the State of Israel was created and for the first time in two millennia we had true sovereignty and nationhood – did we re-think what the role of Judaism is and can be in the world, and how to translate halakha and aggada into the public, national and international sphere, or did halakha and aggada continue to operate in the same narrowly-defined parameters of the past?

What was our response when presented with these challenges, this new reality? For many the response this time was obvious. Judaism had – in their eyes – lost all relevance, all claims to truth, all claims to morality. The answer was to leave, as the school child who runs away. And for many others, the only solution was to pretend as if nothing had happened. To shift from the nice stable reality that they had become accustomed to over all these years, was unthinkable. The solution was to remain firmly encamped in the desert. Only a few understood that we had entered a new parsha, that we needed to move, but that we had to discover how to move – how to move forward with the aron at the center. While this new parsha undoubtedly means struggles, challenges, and risks, the alternative is unthinkable – to remain encamped in the desert, to relegate ourselves to irrelevance.

As those of us enter new chapters in our lives, we must ask ourselves how we will bring the Torah with us, how it will guide us during the shaky transition, and how it will remain at our center as we enter our new realities. And for those who are now leaving yeshiva, leaving rabbinical school and becoming rabbis, the challenge is even greater. These soon-to-be

rabbis are throwing themselves into the larger challenges of the world, of Klal Yisrael, and of rabbinic leadership. They must have no illusions that we can keep the Torah in the desert. They must be keenly aware of the challenges that confront us. They must know that, on the one hand, they must strengthen the camp as much as possible, must establish it on a foundation that is foursquare and firm – that they must teach Torah in ways that are profound and meaningful, that they must give halakhic guidance that is sensitive to the individual and true to halakha, that they must run minyanim, visit the sick, be present at semachot and at times of loss and suffering, that they must be wise pastoral counselors and inspiring religious leaders.

But they also must know that to do just this is to keep the Torah from moving forward. Our future religious leaders must know that to truly face the challenges of today they must be prepared to take on questions of the relevance of Torah Judaism, questions of faith and Biblical criticism, questions of God and the Holocaust, questions of the legitimacy of the State of Israel, its relevance and its role in world affairs, questions of the morality of halakha. They must know that perhaps the most pressing question today is not how to get to the Promised Land, but what and where is the Promised Land? Not in the geographic sense, but in the spiritual, religious sense. What is the purpose of being Jewish? What does God want from us? What is our role in the world? They must know that to not address these questions is another type of Tikkun HaBracha, another way of running away from the demands of the Torah, a Torah that must be brought into our world. To know this is to be the religious leaders that we most desperately need. To know this is to be the ones that will, that must, lead our people forward, to grapple with these challenges openly and honestly, to find their way out of the desert. To know this is to be the leaders that will bring the Torah, that will bring the Jewish People, into the Promised Land.

Shabbat Shalom!

Sweetness and Light: Thoughts for Parashat Beha'aloteha

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

For many years, we were regular customers of a local store. The proprietor always greeted us with a smile, called us by name, asked about our family. If our bill amounted to $51.10, he would often just round it off at $50. He genuinely loved his work and had a warm relationship with us and his many other customers.

But a few years ago, he retired and another person took over the business. The new proprietor always has a glum expression on his face, rarely greets us when we enter the store, seems to wish he was anywhere else but in the store. If our bill amounts to $51.10, we pay every cent of it, since he never rounds off the total.

We find that we now rarely shop at this store. The merchandise is the same…but the shopping experience has become unpleasant. We've found other stores to patronize.

What's true in business is also true in religious life. When a rabbi/synagogue/community is welcoming, approachable and genuinely interested in us, we are more likely to respond positively. If a rabbi/synagogue/community doesn't really seem to care about us — except for our membership dues and donations — we are likely to look for a more congenial religious setting.

This week's Torah portion relates the details of the lighting of the menorah by Aaron the High Priest. Aaron's role was not merely to provide light for the sanctuary, but to symbolically create an atmosphere of holiness, warmth, and enlightenment for the public.

In the Pirkei Avot, we read the words of Hillel: Be among the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving people and drawing them close to the Torah. Aaron, who lit the menorah in the sanctuary, was himself a personification of the spirit of kindness; he brought light to others through his warmth, caring, and genuine desire to develop friendships among the community. He was successful in bringing people closer to Torah because they were attracted to his kindness, to his concern for them and their families.

The late Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach founded a synagogue in Berkeley during the 1960s in order to reach out to the many

young Jews who had drifted away from Jewish tradition. He named it the House of Love and Prayer. In the summer of 1967, he was asked to explain his vision for this synagogue.

He answered: *"Here's the whole thing, simple as it is. The House of Love and Prayer is a place where, when you walk in, someone loves you, and when you walk out, someone misses you."* (Quoted in *Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach: Life, Mission and Legacy,* by Natan Ophir, Urim Publications, 2014, p.119)

In these few words, Rabbi Carlebach expressed a profound insight worthy of immortality! He offered a vision not just for the House of Love and Prayer…but for all places of Jewish worship. When we enter a synagogue, do we feel welcomed? Does our presence mean anything to those in attendance? When we leave, does anyone miss us? Do the rabbi and synagogue officials take the time to get to know us, our needs, our concerns?

One might attend various synagogues and find the same general liturgy and customs — but in one synagogue one feels ignored or rebuffed, and in another synagogue one feels warmly received and appreciated. Which would you choose to attend and support?

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

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 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.

https://www.jewishideas.org/article/sweetness-and-light-thoughts-parashat-behaaloteha

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Remembering Justice Benjamin Nathan Cardozo

By Rabbi Marc Angel *

Benjamin Nathan Cardozo (1870-1938) was one of the greatest American jurists. During his distinguished career, he served as Chief Judge of the New York State Court of Appeals from 1926 until his appointment to the United States Supreme Court in 1932. He was known for his calm wisdom, personal dignity, and his commitment to social justice. His speeches and writings were characterized by clear thinking and graceful style.

Cardozo was born into a Sephardic Jewish family that had roots in America since Colonial days. Among his ancestors were those who fought in the American Revolution. His family was associated with Congregation Shearith Israel, the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of New York, founded in 1654; he retained his loyalty to Shearith Israel throughout his life, and was buried in the congregation's cemetery upon his death.

As a young attorney, recently graduated from the Law School of Columbia University, Cardozo had several interactions at Shearith Israel that reflected his generally traditional worldview. In 1895, as the congregation was planning to build a new synagogue building on Central Park West, a number of leading members were calling for reforms in the synagogue's customs. For centuries, Shearith Israel had followed the ancient traditions of Western Sephardim, including the separation of men and women during prayer services. The reformers called for various changes, including a seating arrangement in the synagogue that allowed men and women to sit together. The congregation's religious leader, Dr. Henry Pereira Mendes, strongly opposed the reforms. Tensions within the congregation came to a head at a meeting of congregants on June 5, 1895. A number of reformers put forth their motion to institute changes; Dr. Mendes and another synagogue leader spoke in opposition to their motion. Then the 25 year old Cardozo made "a long address, impressive in ability and eloquence," in which he argued for the continuity of synagogue tradition. He pointed out that the congregation's constitution provided for separate seating of men and women, following in the traditional patterns of Spanish and Portuguese congregations. It would be unlawful to violate the constitution. Aside from the legal point, Cardozo stressed the importance of maintaining synagogue traditions that had been established and maintained by generations of congregants. Regardless of one's personal opinions or level of religious observance, the synagogue is a sacred space

that should maintain its integrity. Following Cardozo's speech, a vote was taken: the motion to alter the synagogue customs was defeated by a vote of 73 to 7!

In 1898, Cardozo gave a talk at Shearith Israel on Benjamin Disraeli, late Prime Minister of the British Commonwealth. Disraeli was born into the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish community of London, but his father had his children baptized before Benjamin's Bar Mitzvah. So he was a Jew by birth and by public perception; but was a Christian by formal religious profession. In spite of facing ongoing anti-Semitism, Disraeli rose to the top of the British government, a highly regarded confidant of Queen Victoria.

The young Cardozo drew a thoughtful portrait of Disraeli's personal and political life. He could not help but recognize the phenomenal rise to power of a man who was constantly subjected to anti-Semitism in spite of his having been baptized. Although Disraeli presented himself as a Christian, he never flinched from pride in his Jewish background. He described Christianity as a fulfillment of Judaism. Cardozo noted that Disraeli's position was problematic: "So we find it to the last — the same union of loyalty to the race and disloyalty to the faith, the same impossible effort to reconcile the irreconcilable and to treat the religious tenets of his manhood as a development of the religion in whose shelter he had been born" *(Disraeli, the Jew,* Essays by Benjamin Cardozo and Emma Lazarus, ed. Michael Selzer, Selzer and Selzer, Great Barrington, Mass, 1993, p.49). Cardozo noted that Disraeli — in spite of his tremendous successes — was ultimately a conflicted and lonely soul: *"The nation marveled at his wit; it laughed at his sallies; it applauded his intrepid spirit; but all the time, it must have felt within its heart that he was a stranger within its gates."*

To his credit, Disraeli never apologized for or denied his Jewishness. Quite the contrary. He flaunted his Jewishness and presented the Jews and Judaism in positive lights. Cardozo offered an appreciation of Disraeli's role vis a vis the Jewish people:

> *"As we look back upon him now, we see, I think, that he affected us for good. He taught us to think worthily of ourselves — that indispensable condition, as men have often said, which must be satisfied before it can be hoped that we shall be thought worthily of by others. He was himself, before all the world, a living illustration of the powers that are in us, of our resources, of our intellect, of our vigor; of our enthusiasm, of our diplomacy; of our finesse. … He might have stood for many other and perhaps greater things; he might have aided us in many other ways; but these he did stand for an in these he did aid us; and if the aid might have been greater, it none the less was great. It is something to have contributed a little to rousing the self-consciousness of a race, in waking it to a sense of its own dignity, and in waking others to a sense of its latent powers. In these days of Zionism, in these days of Herzl and Nordau, let us remember that we are working upon soil which Disraeli and men like him have helped posterity to till. By his own personality, as well as by his words and deeds, he seemed to weave into the woof of English public life some portion of the Hebraic spirit; to Hebraize the mid of the Protestant and the Puritan; and even to revive in his own day some glimmer of those ancient glories which it was one of the functions of his life to illustrate to the world. For that service at least, let us honor him tonight"* ((pp. 65-66).

In a series of lectures at Yale University in 1921, Cardozo reflected on the nature of the judicial process.

> *"There is in each of us a stream of tendency, whether you choose to call it philosophy or note, which gives coherence and direction to thought and action. Judges cannot escape that current any more than other mortals. All their lives, forces which they do not recognize and cannot name, have been tugging at them — inherited instincts, traditional beliefs, acquired convictions; and the resultant is an outlook on life, a conception of social needs….We may try to see things as objectively as we please. None the less, we can never see them with any eyes except our own*" *(The Nature of the Judicial Process,* Yale University Press, New Haven, 1921, p. 12).

Cardozo's own "stream of tendency" included a deep respect for tradition…but a keen awareness of the forces for change. While he understood that judges must not set aside existing rules at pleasure, he also criticized *"the demon of formalism."* Judges must balance their decisions, taking into consideration the welfare of society. Cardozo drew on a Talmudic teaching that describes God as offering Himself a prayer: *"Be it my will that my justice be ruled by my mercy."*

He suggested that judges keep this prayer in mind during their own deliberations (pp. 66-67).

In a keenly self-revelatory comment, Cardozo reminisced on what he had learned from his experiences as a judge:

> *"I was much troubled in spirit, in my first years upon the bench, to find how trackless was the ocean on which I had embarked. I sought for certainty. I was oppressed and disheartened when I found that the quest for it was futile….As the years have gone by, and as I have reflected more and more upon the nature of the judicial process, I have become reconciled to the uncertainty, because I have grown to see it as inevitable"* (p. 166).

In a subsequent series of lectures at Yale, Cardozo noted that *"law must be stable, and yet it cannot stand still….The victory is not for the partisans of an inflexible logic nor yet for the levelers of all rule and all precedent, but the victory is for those who shall know how to fuse these two tendencies together in adaptation to an end as yet imperfectly discerned" (The Growth of the Law,* Yale University Press, New Haven, 1924, p. 143).

Cardozo appreciated the need for balancing various tendencies — the faithfulness to precedents and the drive for change. It is not a simple matter to judge fairly and correctly:

> *"In our worship of certainty, we must distinguish between the sound certainty and the sham, between what is gold and what is tinsel; and then, when certainty is attained, we must remember that it is not the only good; that we can buy it at too high a price; that there is a danger in perpetual quiescence as well as in perpetual motion; and that a compromise must be found in a principle of growth"* (pp. 16-17).

Cardozo's vast erudition was accompanied with a profound sense of social responsibility, his own personal dignity, and a calm wisdom. He was serenely confident and competent; and at the same time, he was genuinely humble and self-reflective.

He was a proud Jew. He was moderately observant of religious rituals, although not strictly so. He expressed his views on religion on various occasions. In 1927, he spoke at a dinner in honor of the 75th birthday of his rabbi at Shearith Israel, Dr. H. P. Mendes. In praising Dr. Mendes, he underscored the values of doing justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with the Lord. That same year, Cardozo spoke at a dinner in honor of his friend, Rabbi Stephen Wise. He again stressed the role of religion as an agent of social justice:

> *"Religion is worthless if it is not translated into conduct. Creeds are snares and hypocrisies if they are not adapted to the needs of life….Has there been some social wrong, some oppression of the people, some grinding of the poor? That is a matter for religion. Has there been cruelty to Jews abroad or to colored men at home?....That is a matter for religion. Has the sacred name of liberty, which should stand for equal opportunity for all, been made a pretext and a cover for special privileges for a few? That is a matter for religion.* (quoted in Andrew L. Kaufman, *Cardozo,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p. 190).

But religion was more than social justice. At its best, religion must be marked by a selfless idealism and commitment to transcendent ideas. In 1931, Cardozo gave the commencement address at the Jewish Institute of Religion, and referred to Tycho Brahe, the 16th century Danish astronomer, who devoted long years to mark and register the stars, when people mocked him for this seemingly useless endeavor. *"The submergence of self in the pursuit of an ideal, the readiness to spend oneself without measure, prodigally, almost ecstatically, for something intuitively apprehended as great and noble, spend oneself one knows not why — some of us like to believe that is what religion means"* (Kaufman, p. 190).

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When I began serving Congregation Shearith Israel in 1969, and for many years thereafter, the rabbis' gowning room was the old office of the late Rabbi Dr. David de Sola Pool. Several photographs hung on the walls, including one of Justice Benjamin Nathan Cardozo which he presented to the Congregation in 1932 upon being appointed to the United States Supreme Court. He inscribed it: *"To the historic Congregation Shearith Israel in the City of New York, with the affectionate*

greetings of its member."

Thus, every morning and evening before synagogue services, I was greeted by the handsome visage of Justice Cardozo. Although he died before I was even born, so that I did not know him personally, I somehow felt a friendship and kinship with him. He was, for me, an entry way into the past of my congregation and community. His photograph conveyed the confidence and the judgment, challenging us to be faithful to the past and yet open to the needs of the present…and future.

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* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

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Beha'aloscha -- I-m-perfect Utopia

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine * © 2018

Following the exodus from Egypt, the Jews were provided for in the desert in a most remarkable way. Food was provided daily in the form of the Manna; drink was provided from a special fountain. Their clothes miraculously grew with them and were perpetually cleaned by the Clouds of Glory which surrounded them. On the spiritual front as well, there were plenty of mitzvah opportunities. The Jews lived in a virtual utopia. One would have expected that there would be no cause for complaint.

But complain they did.

The Torah tells us of a group that complained about a few select foods whose tastes were unavailable to them in the desert. Likewise, we are told that there was a group that approached Moshe with the complaint that they were excluded from the mitzvah of the Korban Pesach. As part of the sacred burial society they were considered ritually impure and were excluded from bringing the special Pesach sacrifice.

Why is it that, even in a virtual utopia, people find the need to complain? And, how does the same environment produce two very different type of complainers: A group that complains about some missing gastronomical delights, in contrast to a group that complains that they were "unfairly" excluded from performing a beloved mitzvah?

Rabbi A. J. Twerski records an insightful story about a certain town in which a great Chasidic Master passed away and was buried in the local cemetery. Soon after the funeral, a disagreement developed between the loyal servant of the Master and the local Rabbi. Each claimed that he was entitled to the one remaining burial plot next to the great Master. The disagreement brought out the passions of many townspeople. Some argued that the town Rabbi was entitled to the distinction of being buried next to the great Master, while others argued that the loyal servant deserved to remain in close proximity to his illustrious mentor.

The question was posed to the Jewish court of a neighboring town.

The ruling was that whoever would die first would be entitled to the coveted burial spot.

As a result, whenever the Master's servant would get sick, the town Rabbi would do whatever he could to make him well. He would have special prayers recited on his behalf and would obtain the best medical care for him. Likewise, whenever the town Rabbi would get sick, the Master's servant would ensure that he got well quickly. The argument between them brought out the best in kindness and generosity for each other.

Rabbi Twerski concludes: It seems that jealousy is a fact of the human condition. The mark of greatness is to be jealous in a good and positive way.

I would suggest that the same is true of the tendency to notice that which is missing. Even in a virtual utopia, there will be complainers. That is human nature. But depending on one's focus, those complaints and cravings can either be the source of blessing, or the cause of destruction.

For those who craved additional mitzvos, their complaints resulted in G-d giving an additional mitzvah, a second chance to observe the Korban Pesach. But, for those who craved and complained about a few missing tastes — despite all of G-d's blessings — the result was G-d's great displeasure and disappointment with their complaints, was punishment.

It is widely understood that the blessings of life are intended as a test. Whether a person is wealthy, smart, or strong, the test of life is to see how he will handle those blessings. What this week's Torah portion introduces is that the need to crave is also a test. No matter how perfect things are, there will always be imperfections. The test of life is to choose from among those things which are missing and decide what it is that is worth craving.

Picture for a moment a young couple taking a tour of a home that they are considering buying. As they tour the house, they count the bedrooms and bathrooms, analyze the dining room, and critique the kitchen. Undoubtedly there will be flaws. But, for a young Jewish couple, the areas of true concern are fairly predictable. "Does the yard have a place for a succah?" "How far away is the local shul or yeshiva?"

All of life, even "utopia," has flaws. This is G-d's way of testing our values. What is it that we will notice? What is it that gives us cause for complaint?

It is said that a great Jew who lived in Jerusalem in the early 1900s fell deathly ill. The attending doctor identified a serious infection that he claimed originated in the patient's teeth. As part of the treatment he directed that all of the teeth be pulled from the then unconscious patient. Miraculously, the treatment succeeded, and when this great man regained consciousness and realized that his teeth were gone, he cried out, "But, if so, how will I chew the matzoh at the Pesach seder?"

The fact is that even utopia has imperfections. But which imperfections bother a person — for example, the loss of an opportunity to perform a mitzvah — is an indicator of their degree of personal greatness.

As such, when we notice an imperfection in our lives we might remind ourselves that the word "imperfect" can remind us, "I am perfect," meaning, "The situation that I find myself in is the perfect one, tailor made, for me."

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos!

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http://www.teach613.org/behaaloscha-i-m-perfect-utopia/

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.

* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD. Rabbi Singer kindly let me run a Dvar Torah from his archives, because commitments out of town require that I post my material very early this week.

Behaalotecha

By Rabbi Herzl Hefter *

[Because of upcoming travel, I must post a few days early this week. Watch for future Devrei Torah from Rabbi Hefter in this spot.]

* Founder and dean of the Har'el Beit Midrash in Jerusalem. Rabbi Hefter is a graduate of Yeshiva University and was ordained at Yeshivat Har Etzion. For more of his writings, see www.har-el.org. To support the Beit Midrash, as we do, send donations to America Friends of Beit Midrash Har'el, 66 Cherry Lane, Teaneck, NJ 07666.

Behaaloteha

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia *

]The file of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah on Sefer Bemidbar did not include comments on this parsha. Watch this space for his Devrei Torah in coming weeks.[

* Torah VeAhava. Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan)Potomac, MD(and faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school(. **New: Many of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah are now available on Sefaria: https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets** . The Sefaria articles usually include Hebrew text, which I must delete because of issues changing software formats.

Behaalotecha: Anti-Semitism

by Rabbi Moshe Rube* © 2021

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:

a(**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.

b(**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.

c(**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.

Shabbat Shalom!

Rabbi Rube

* Senior Rabbi of Auckland Hebrew Congregation, Remuera)Auckland(, New Zealand. Formerly Rabbi, Congregation Knesseth Israel)Birmingham, AL(. Because my travel required me to post early this week, I am running an important archive column from Rabbi Rube.

Rav Kook Torah
Beha'alotcha: A Tale of Two Prayers

A Short Prayer for Miriam

When Miriam was stricken with leprosy, Moses beseeched God to heal his sister, saying a remarkably brief prayer: *"Please God, please heal her"*)Num. 12:13(. The Talmud)Berachot 34a(took note of the unusual brevity of this prayer in the following story:

Once, a student led the prayers in Rabbi Eliezer's house of study, and his prayers were unusually lengthy. The other students complained, "Master, how slow this fellow is!"

Rabbi Eliezer responded to them, "He is no slower than Moses, who pleaded on behalf of the Jewish people]after the sin of the golden calf[for forty days and forty nights."

On another occasion, a different student led the prayers. This student recited the prayers quickly. The other students complained, "How hasty this fellow is!"

This time Rabbi Eliezer replied, "He is no hastier than Moses, who pleaded for his sister's recovery with a few short words."

What determined the length of Moses' prayers? Why did his own sister merit only a brief, one-line prayer?

Two Types of Prayer

Prayer serves two functions. The first function is to refine character traits and deepen awareness — either for the person praying, or for the one being prayed for. This type of prayer requires tenacity and perseverance, since correction of flawed traits requires extended effort, and usually occurs gradually over time.

For this reason, Moses needed to pray extensively when he prayed for the Jewish people after the calamitous sin of the golden calf. Why forty days? This period is the time it takes for an embryo to develop limbs and become recognizable as a human fetus. The forty days of Moses' prayer indicated a rebirth of the Jewish people, with a new heart and spirit.

There is, however, a second function of prayer. Sometimes the inner emotions and character traits have already been refined and purified. Prayer only comes to put in words that which already exists in the inner soul. In such cases, an extended prayer is unnecessary; even a brief prayer may express many holy feelings. In the case of Miriam, she had already conceded her mistake. Her healing, both physical and spiritual, required only a short, simple prayer.

)Gold from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 163.(

https://www.ravkooktorah.org/BEHAALOT59.htm

Moses' Challenge)Behaalotecha 5773(

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

It was the worst crisis in Moses' life. Incited by the 'mixed multitude', the Israelites complain about the food:

> *'If only we had meat to eat. We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost – also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna.'*

It was an appalling show of ingratitude, but not the first time the Israelites had behaved this way. Three earlier episodes are recorded in the book of Exodus)chs. 15-17(immediately after the crossing of the Red Sea. First at Marah they complained that the water was bitter. Then, in more aggressive terms, they protested at the lack of food *)'If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat round pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death'(.* Later, at Refidim, they grumbled at the absence of water, prompting Moses to say to God, *'What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me!'*

The episode in this week's Torah portion – at the place that became known asKivrot Hataavah – was not, then, the first such challenge Moses had faced, but the fourth. Yet Moses' reaction this time is nothing less than complete despair:

> *Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you, that you put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their forefathers? Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat'. I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now – if I have found favour in your eyes – and do not let me face my own ruin.*

It is an extraordinary outburst. Moses prays to die. He is not the last prophet of Israel to do so. Elijah, Jeremiah and Jonah did likewise – making us realise that even the greatest can have their moments of despair. Yet the case of Moses is particularly puzzling. He had faced, and overcome, such difficulties before. Each time, God had answered the people's requests. He had sent water, and manna, and quails. Moses knew this. Why then did the fourth outburst of the people)'If only we had meat to eat'(induce in this, the strongest of men, what seems nothing less than a complete breakdown?

Equally strange is God's reaction:

> *Bring me 70 elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Make them come to the Tent of Meeting that they may stand there with you. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the spirit that is on you and put the spirit on them. They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone.*

To be sure, this is a response to Moses' complaint, *'I cannot carry all these people by myself.'* Yet both complaint and response are puzzling. In what way would the appointment of elders address the internal crisis Moses was undergoing? Did he need them to help him find meat? Clearly not. Either it would appear by a miracle or it would not appear at all. Did he need them to share the burdens of leadership? The answer is again, No. Already, not long before, on the advice of his father-in-law Yitro, he had created an infrastructure of delegation. Yitro had said this:

> *'What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you. You cannot handle it alone. Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. But select capable men from all the people – men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain – and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.'*

Moses acted on the suggestion. He therefore already had assistants, deputies, a leadership team. In what way would this new appointment of seventy elders make a difference?

Besides which, why the emphasis in God's reply on spirit: *'I will take of the spirit that is on you and put the spirit on them'?* In what way did the elders need to become prophets in order to help Moses? Being a prophet does not help someone in carrying out administrative or other burdens of leadership. It helps only in knowing what guidance to give the people – and for this, one prophet, Moses, is sufficient. To put it more precisely, either the seventy elders would deliver the same message as Moses or they would not. If they did, they would be superfluous. If they did not, they would undermine his authority — precisely what Joshua]11: 28[feared.

Aware of the multiple difficulties in the text, Ramban offers the following interpretation:

> *'Moses thought that if they had many leaders, they would appease their wrath by speaking to their hearts when the people started complaining. Or it is possible that when the elders prophesied, and the spirit was on them, the people would know that the elders were established as prophets and would not all gather against Moses but would ask for their desires from them as well.'*

Both suggestions are insightful, but neither is without difficulty. The first – that the elders would become peacemakers among the people – did not call for a new leadership cadre. Moses already had the heads of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. The second – that their presence would diffuse the people's anger by giving them many people, not one, to complain to – is equally hard to understand. We recall that when the people had one other person to turn to with their concerns)Aaron(, this led to the making of the Golden Calf. Why did God not *'take of the spirit'* that was on Moses and place it on Aaron at that time? It would have prevented the single greatest catastrophe in the wilderness years? Besides which, we do not find that the seventy elders actually did anything at Kivrot Hataavah. The text even says]11: 25[*'When the spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do so again'* 8]this is the plain sense according to most commentators, though the Targum reads it differently[. How then did this once-and-never-to-be-repeated flow of the prophetic spirit make a difference? The more we reflect on the passage, the more the difficulties multiply.

Yet something happened. Moses' despair disappeared. His attitude was transformed. Immediately thereafter, it is as if a new Moses stands before us, untroubled by even the most serious challenges to his leadership. When two of the elders, Eldad and Medad, prophesy not in the Tent of Meeting but in the camp, Joshua senses a threat to Moses' authority and says, *'Moses, my lord, stop them!'* Moses replies, with surpassing generosity of spirit, *'Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his spirit on them.*' In the next chapter, when his own brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, start complaining about him, he does nothing – *'Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.'* Indeed, when God became angry at Miriam he prayed on her behalf. The despair has gone. The crisis has passed. These two challenges were far more serious than the request of the people for meat, yet Moses meets them with confidence and equanimity. Something has taken place between him and God and he has been transformed. What was it?

To understand the sequence of events we must first place them in their historical context. Rabbi Moshe Lichtenstein, in his insightful book on Moses' leadership, *Tzir ve-tzon*)Alon Shvut, 5762(notes that there is a marked change of tone between the book of Exodus and the book of Numbers. The complaints do not change, but God's and Moses' responses do. In Exodus, God does not get angry with the people, or if he does, Moses' prayers are able to turn away wrath. In Numbers, the response – sometimes God's, sometimes Moses – are more unforgiving. What has changed?

R. Lichtenstein, correctly in my view, suggests that the early volatility of the people is forgivable. To be sure, they should have had faith in God, but they had never been faced with the Red Sea, or the desert, or lack of food and water before. Their greatest offence – making the Golden Calf – leads to a long pause in the narrative, essentially from Exodus chapter 25 to Numbers chapter 11. During this period, in response to Moses' prayer for forgiveness, God instructs the people to build a tabernacle which will ensure his constant presence among them.

Much of the second half of Exodus, the entire book of Leviticus and the first ten chapters of Numbers are dedicated to the details of the sanctuary, the service that was to take place there, and the reconstitution of Israel as a holy nation camped, tribe by tribe, around it. The whole of this sequence of 53 chapters, all of which is set in the desert at Sinai, is a kind of meta-historical moment, a break in the journey of the Israelites from place to place. Time and space stand still. Between the twin events of the Giving of the Torah and the construction of the Tabernacle, the Israelites are turned from an undisciplined mass of fugitive slaves into a nation whose constitution is the Torah, whose sovereign is God alone, and at whose centre)physically and metaphysically(is the Mishkan or sanctuary, the visible sign of God's presence. They are no longer what they were before they came to Sinai. They are now *'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'*

Hence Moses' despair when they murmured about the food. They had done so before. But they were different before. They had not yet gone through the transformative experiences that shaped them as a nation. What caused Moses' spirit to break was the fact that, no sooner had they left the Sinai desert to begin the journey again, they reverted to their old habits of complaint as if nothing had changed. If the revelation at Sinai, the experience of Divine anger at the Golden Calf, and the long labour of building the Tabernacle had not changed them, what would or could? Moses' despair is all too intelligible. For the first time since his mission began he could see defeat staring him in the face. Nothing – or so it seemed — not miracles, deliverances, revelations, or creative labour, could change this people from a nation that thought of food into one that grasped the significance of the unique ethical-spiritual destiny to which they had been called. Perhaps God, from the perspective of eternity, could see some ray of hope in the future. Moses, as a human being, could not. *'I would rather die,'* he says, *'than spend the rest of my life labouring in vain.'*

We now reach the point of speculation. I may be wrong)as Netziv puts it in his introduction to Haamek Davar, section 5(but I interpret the sequence of events as follows:

> There can come a time in the life of any truly transformative leader when the sun of hope is eclipsed by the clouds of doubt – not about God, but about people, above all about oneself. Am I really making a difference? Am I deceiving myself when I think I can change the world? I have tried, I have given the very best of my energies and inspiration, yet nothing seems to alter the depressing reality of human frailty and lack of vision. I have given the people the word of God himself, yet they still complain, still they think only about the discomforts of today, not the vast possibilities of tomorrow. Such despair)lehavdil, Winston Churchill, who suffered from it, called it the 'black dog'(can occur to the very greatest)to repeat: not only Moses but also Elijah, Jeremiah and Jonah prayed to die(. Moses was the very greatest. Therefore God gave him the greatest gift of all – one that no one else has ever been given.

God let Moses see the influence he had on others. For a brief moment God took *'the spirit that is on you and put it on them'* so that Moses could see the difference he had made to one group, the seventy elders. Moses needed nothing more. He did not need their help. He did not need them to continue to prophesy. All he needed was a transparent glimpse of how his spirit had communicated itself to them. Then he knew he had made a difference. Little could he have known that he – who encountered almost nothing from the Israelites in his lifetime but complaints, challenges and rebellions – would have so decisive an influence that the people of Israel 3,300 years later would still be studying and living by the words he transmitted; that he had helped forge an identity that would prove more tenacious than any other in the history of

mankind; that in the full perspective of hindsight he would prove to have been the greatest leader that ever lived. He did not know these things; he did not need to know these things. All he needed was to see that seventy elders had internalised his spirit and made his message their own. Then he knew that his life was not in vain. He had disciples. His vision was not his alone. He had planted it in others. Others, too, would continue his work after his lifetime. That was enough for him, as it must be for us. Once Moses knew this, he could face any challenge with equanimity)except, many years later, at Kadesh, but that is another story(.

Understood thus there is a message in Moses' crisis for all of us)that, surely, is why it is recounted in the Torah(. I remember when my late father z"l died and we – my mother and brothers – were sitting shiva. Time and again people would come and tell us of kindnesses he had done for them, in some cases more than 50 years before. I have since discovered that many people who have sat shiva, have had similar experiences.

How moving, I thought, and at the same time how sad, that my father z"l was not there to hear their words. What comfort it would have brought him to know that despite the many hardships he faced, the good he did was not forgotten. And how tragic that we so often keep our sense of gratitude to ourselves, saying it aloud only when the person to whom we feel indebted has left this life, and we are comforting his or her mourners.

Perhaps that just is the human condition. We never really know how much we have given others – how much the kind word, the thoughtful deed, the comforting gesture, changes lives and is never forgotten. In this respect, if in no other, we are like Moses. He too was human; he had no privileged access into other people's minds; without a miracle, he could not have known the influence he had on those closest to him. All the evidence seemed to suggest otherwise. The people, even after all God and he had done for them, were still ungrateful, querulous, quick to criticize and complain. But that was on the surface. For a moment God gave him a glimpse of what was beneath the surface. He showed him how Moses' spirit had entered others and lifted them, however briefly, to the level of prophetic vision.

God did this for no other person – not then, not now. But if it was enough for Moses, it is enough for us. The good we do lives after us. It is the greatest thing that does. We may leave a legacy of wealth, power, even fame, but these are questionable benefits and sometimes harm rather than help those we leave them to. What we leave to others is a trace of our influence for good. We may never see it, but it is there. That is the greatest blessing of leadership. It alone is the antidote to despair, the solid ground of hope.

https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/behaalotecha/moses-challenge/

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. Any footnotes from the original speech have not been preserved.

Why No Paschal Offering for 39 Years in the Desert?

By Yossi Ives * © Chabad 2023

As strange as it may seem, the Israelites seem to have only observed Passover once during their 40-year sojourn in the desert: the first Passover after the Exodus from Egypt. The sages1 noted this difficult-to-explain lapse and commented that it was a "disgrace to the Israelites" that for 39 out of 40 years the Passover offering was not brought.

Commentators2 have noted that it was not possible for them to bring the Passover offering during their years in the desert, as the Israelites did not practice circumcision then, and the Torah3 is very clear that only someone circumcised may bring the Passover offering.

Indeed, we read in the book of Joshua4 that the Israelites crossed over the Jordan River a few days before Passover,5 and that they were circumcised en masse and subsequently brought the Passover offering.

This is remarkable, as the Israelites had just crossed over into enemy territory, and yet they went about circumcising all the males)rendering them all defenseless(so that they could celebrate Passover, while for the prior nearly four decades)when the risks were possibly much lower(they had not done so.
How come for all those years the Israelites lapsed in their practice of such a foundational observance, especially if it would prevent them from observing Passover?

Tosafot,6 the great medieval commentary to the Talmud, takes the view that many Israelites did indeed bring the Paschal offering during the forty years in the desert — but only those who were circumcised did so.)Tosafot adds that, ideally, anyone who had a family member who was uncircumcised was not supposed to bring the offering. Thus many of those who did bring the Passover lamb were not doing so correctly.(

According to this view, many Israelites brought the Passover offering during the desert years. And as the years passed, more children were born but not circumcised. Thus, the proportion of Israelites not observing Passover was continually increasing.

But how can we explain that hundreds of thousands of Israelites failed to observe Passover properly year after year?7

Rashi8 takes the view9 that the Passover offering was only ever commanded as an observance in the Land of Israel, which is why it was not done in the desert. The one year when the offering was brought was an exception due to Divine decree. If so, the people did nothing wrong by not bringing the offering.

But we are still left wondering why Rashi himself says that it was regarded as a “disgrace” that the Israelites didn’t bring the offering. Clearly, then, it is something that they should have clamored for.10 If so, why did they not do so? And we are still left wondering why there would be no reason to bring the Passover offering in the years prior to entering the land.

Passover and Jewish Identity

We will arrive at a highly satisfactory explanation by way of a unique insight from the Rebbe. The Midrash tells that on the night of the Exodus, although Moses had instructed the Israelites in Egypt to prepare a lamb to be eaten on the night of their redemption, many failed to do so, choosing to ignore Moses and his directives.

What happened was that Moses began making his own Paschal offering, and miraculously the scent from the roasting spread a vast distance and became so overwhelming that those Israelites that had no Passover lamb came begging Moses to allow them to partake of his meal.

The Midrash11 relates that *Moses explained to those people that he was unable to include them in the meal, as the rule is that* “no foreigner may eat of it”12 – and as they were intermingling with the Egyptians they were disqualified. So enticed were they by the scent of Moses’ Passover lamb that they promptly acquiesced and separated themselves from the heathens.

Having done this, says the Midrash, they returned to Moses asking to partake. However, Moses had more news for them: the rule is clear that *“no one uncircumcised may eat from it.”*13 Thus, they went and had themselves circumcised. In this manner, those who were initially uninspired to prepare for the Exodus became incentivized to ready themselves.

The Rebbe14 asks a striking question on this Midrash: Why did Moses focus his initial attention on the fact that those Israelites were intermingling with Egyptians, instead of focusing on the main issue, which is the fact that they were uncircumcised? After all, the prohibition was only for the “foreigner” to actually eat the Passover offering, and no one was suggesting that the foreigners with whom they had mingled join them in eating the sacrifice. By contrast, the problem of being uncircumcised meant they were definitely prevented from themselves eating from the Paschal lamb.

This must mean, the Rebbe explains, that in Moses’ eyes, securing the distinct identity of the Israelites was a central theme of the Passover offering. To Moses, the celebration of Passover was meant to create a sense of Jewish nationhood, distinct from Egyptian culture and society. Given that Passover aims to establish an Israelite identity, the issue of assimilation was Moses’ first and overriding concern.

No Assimilation in the Desert

Armed with this insight, we can now understand how come the Israelites)or a great many of them(did not bring the Passover offering in the desert. A desert is defined in the book of Jeremiah as *"an uninhabited place."*15 In the desert, the Israelites lived in splendid isolation and came in contact with virtually no one. Thus, the potential for assimilation was nonexistent. There was, therefore, no critical need for Passover in the desert. Given there was some degree of risk in having a circumcision in the desert conditions,16 the Israelites had a legitimate reason to postpone this ritual, as there was no great loss in not bringing the Passover offering in an uninhabited desert.17

However, once the Israelites had crossed over the Jordan River and entered the Land of Canaan, the issue of assimilation became ever so real. Now, there was absolutely a need for the Israelites to be reminded of their unique identity. Having entered a land full of idol worshipers, it was of great necessity that they circumcise and bring the Paschal lamb, so as to ensure that they would remain true to their identity and destiny.

Herein lies an important lesson: We can and should reach out and impact the whole world in the broadest possible manner. Still, we can only go about doing so once we have established our own identity. The great contributions the Jewish people have made to the world are only possible because we have stayed true to our distinct heritage and values.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Sifri and Rashi to Number 9:1.

2. Ohr Sameach to Maimonides' Mishneh Torah, Laws of Ritual Slaughter 4:17.

3. Exodus 12:48.

4. Joshua 5:1-9.

5. On the tenth day of the Hebrew month of Nissan. The Passover offering is brought in the afternoon of the fourteenth day of Nissan.

6. Tosafot to Talmud, Yevamot 72a. Tosafot's view is based on the Talmudic position that the Israelites were obligated to bring the Paschal offering in the desert. But see below that other ancient sources adopt a different position.

7. For an alternative exploration of this issue, see The Pesach Offering in the Desert.

8. In his commentary to Exodus 12:25.

9. Based upon the view of the Mechilta and Mechilta d'Rabbi Shimon, both on Bo chapter 12.

10. This is the explanation given by the Rebbe in Likutei Sichot vol. 23 page 65-7.

11. Shir Hashirim Rabbah 1:12.

12. Exodus 12:43.

13. Exodus 12:48.

14. Torat Menachem vol. 9 page 88.

15. Jeremiah 2:6.

16. Talmud Yevamot 72a.

17. A very similar explanation is offered in Meshech Chochma to Numbers 9:7.

* Rabbi of Congregation Ahavas Yisrael of Pomona, N.Y.; founder and Chief Executive of Tag International Development, a charitable organization that focuses on sharing Israeli expertise with developing countries.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/5548606/jewish/Why-No-Paschal-Offering-for-39-Years-in-the-Desert.htm

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Behaalotecha: True Humility

by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky *

G d appointed 70 elders to assist Moses. Moses' wife remarked to his sister Miriam that these elders would probably separate from their wives, just as Moses had separated from her in order to be ready for prophecy at any moment. Hearing this, Miriam, together with Aaron, disapproved of Moses' behavior. G d told Miriam and Aaron that Moses had acted correctly, since he had to be ready at all times for Divine communication, which was not the case with other prophets. G d afflicted Miriam with the skin disease of tzara'at, which specifically results from slander. Moses then prayed for Miriam's recovery, and G d healed her.

True Humility

Moses was exceedingly humble, more so than any other person on earth. Numbers 12:3

Humility is not the result of underestimating one's true worth. Moses understood very well that he was an extraordinary individual, who had been chosen by G d to lead the Jewish people out of Egypt and to receive the Torah on their behalf. However, Moses also thought that had G d given his lofty traits to someone else, that person would have been able to reach an even higher level than he had attained.

Humility is often misunderstood as simply the lack of boastfulness: We are "humble" if we feel superior to others so long as we don't boast about it! True humility, however, is learned from Moses. We should be fully aware of whatever greatness we possess, but attribute it to G d rather than to ourselves. This allows us to respect other people and see them in a positive light, inasmuch as G d has blessed them with their own unique qualities.)*Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5710, p. 236.(

Gut Shabbos,
Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
Kehot Publication Society

https://www.chabad.org/dailystudy/dailywisdom_cdo/aid/2950396/jewish/Shabbat-True-Humility.htm

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Introduction to Behaalotecha

By Alan A. Fisher [1]

Behaalotecha is a long, complex parsha that contains numerous incidents and changes in mood. 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 in inverted nuns, giving the appearance of brackets. The brackets (inverted nuns) enclose Moshe's exuberant words describing the camp moving toward Israel (10:35-36). The text 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 changes. We see repeated references to "ra" (evil) and mentions of gathering in (language of death that the Torah uses frequently, especially in Sefer Bereishis). As the Rav (Joseph B. Soloveitchik, z"l) states in his famous Dvar Torah on this parsha, 10:35-36 have brackets to indicate that once the people start complaining and angering Hashem, this short section becomes misplaced. There is no place for Moshe's praises when the people's complaints stop the progress toward Israel. [2]

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 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 infer that many of these people are suffering from depression – a common disease that affects many Jews (as well as non-Jews). [3] Rabbi David Block, who works with Rabbi David Fohrman (Alephbeta.org), notes that the Jews have trouble accepting the manna (a complete food from God that arrives six days a week). They try to process the manna, by grinding and pounding it, making it into cakes, and cooking it (11:7-8). Rabbi Block interprets this behavior as the people wanting some control over what they are eating. They are unwilling to feel vulnerable and entirely dependent on God. This unwillingness to accept God's gift of watching over all aspects of their lives scares the generation of the Exodus. They have a paralyzing fear of being vulnerable, and that fear

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[1] Potomac Torah Study Center; archives at PotomacTorah.org ©2022.

[2] https://torah.org/torah-portion/mikra-5774-behaaloscha/ The Rav concludes that Moshe suffers a crisis in his leadership when the people start looking for complaints as soon as they leave the base of Har Sinai for what should have been the final trip to Canaan. The Rav's conclusions, while brilliant, at times depart from traditional interpretations in the Rabbinic literature.

[3] Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, z"l, concludes that Moshe suffers from depression and despair when B'Nai Yisrael search for reasons to complain as soon as they leave the base of Har Sinai for the final approach to the land that Hashem promised to the Avot. Rabbi Sacks shows that other prophets and leaders, including Churchill, also suffer from depression. He states that prophets do not believe in themselves; rather, they believe in Hashem. They lead because there is a need for a leader, not because they wish to lead. Being a leader is a cure for despair. See https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/behaalotecha/leadership-beyond-despair/

comes out in ways that both Moshe and God consider evil. Rabbi Yehoshua Singer adds 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 take place between 22 and 29 Sivan in the second year after the Exodus. [4] 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. [5] My interpretation is that after the evil events when B'Nai Yisrael leave the base of Har Sinai, Moshe and God soon realize that the generation of the Exodus is not qualified to enter the land of Israel. Events in chapters 12-18 reinforce 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 provide the leadership that B'Nai Yisrael will need to enter, capture, and settle the land of Israel.

The psychological analysis of the problems of the generation of the Exodus, focusing on their apparent depression and fear of accepting gifts from Hashem, suggests a lesson for Jews even today. God left our world incomplete so that we humans can be partners with Hashem in repairing the world. Tikkun olam is a mitzvah for Jews. We have a mandate to do our part to improve the world – and to be leaders in this effort if necessary. Behaalotecha teaches us that when we step aside and complain rather than making an effort to be Hashem's partner, we are asking for disaster. When we do our part, we can improve the world. I see some of this effort in recent news. Russia's invasion, rampant destruction, and brutal murders in Ukraine have shocked the world. One effect is European nations looking for ways to boycott Russia's petroleum and natural gas to impose economic losses on the country. Several countries that until recently have been enemies of Israel are turning to us to enter into long-term contracts for gas. Israel is looking to open a third natural gas field off its coast to meet this demand, and Israel is devoting 20 percent of its gas reserves to these exports. Turkey is inviting Israel to have a gas pipeline crossing Turkey to increase capacity for Israeli gas to reach other parts of Europe. A few dozen countries in the U.N. that had always voted against Israel now have supported Israel against some anti-Semitic petitions,

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[4] (See Torah Anthology 13:333-34.) Rabbi Magriso bases his conclusion on a careful study of where B'Nai Yisrael stopped during the years in the Midbar, how long there were at each stop, and where they were when the waited for Miriam to recover from tzaraat, when the Meraglim departed, and similar evidence in the Torah.

When B'Nai Yisrael leave the base of Har Sinai in chapter 10, we can deduce that it is after a full year by Har Sinai. The Jews cross the Sea of Reeds on the seventh day of Pesach in the year 2448. They travel and pass a few locations before they reach the base of Har Sinai. Parshat Yitro opens with Moshe's family reaching the camp at the base of Har Sinai (Shemot 18:1), although commentators conclude that this chapter takes place after the Revelation. We know that Hashem tells Moshe to spend three days having the people prepare for the Revelation, so they must have arrived and set up camp before Rosh Hodesh Sivan – probably late in Iyar 2448. The people resume their journey, leaving the base of Har Sinai, on 20 Iyar 2449. This analysis demonstrates that they remain at the base of Har Sinai for almost exactly a year. The Torah devotes 20 parashot, containing 60 chapters, to activities during little more than a year from the end of Pesach 2448 to 20 Iyar 2449. (Miriam's tzaraat, the departure of the Meraglim, and Korach's rebellion all take place the same week, so we have 23 parashot, containing 67 chapters, covering 13 months, before the Torah skips over 38 years in parshat Chukat.)

[5] The Torah could have placed the Red Heifer material any place after Yitro. Hashem obviously presented this law to Moshe on Har Sinai; otherwise, any Jew who came into contact with a dead body would not have known how to become tahor.

and the U.N. has even selected Israel to be one of the vice presidents in the U.N. Leadership in tikkun olam is even helping Israel in the U.N., of all places that would have seemed unlikely until very recently.

For several decades, Avi West directed educational resources for the Jewish Federation of Washington and many other organizations. Delving into the seventy levels of depth in the Torah is an appropriate venue for honoring this humble man who was a mentor to so many educators in our community. One example of the type of effort in which Avi West excelled is working out what is happening and when in the Torah. Bereishis and Noach cover two thousand years of history in two weeks of Torah reading. We are about to conclude 23 parashot, covering 67 chapters spanning 13 months – and find that three different stories, which cover three weeks in the Torah (Miriam's tzaraat, the Meraglim, and Korach), all take place the same week. The Torah then skips over 38 years before resuming in the final year in the Midbar. Nuances of this sort require close study, what Avi West made available to educators and students in our community for many years.

Likutei Divrei Torah

Gleanings of Divrei Torah on Parashat Hashavuah via the Internet

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Covenant and Conversation
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

From Pain to Humility

David Brooks, in his bestselling book, The Road to Character,[1] draws a sharp distinction between what he calls the résumé virtues – the achievements and skills that bring success – and the eulogy virtues, the ones that are spoken of at funerals: the virtues and strengths that make you the kind of person you are when you are not wearing masks or playing roles, the inner person that friends and family recognise as the real you.

Brooks relates this distinction to the one made by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik in his famous essay, The Lonely Man of Faith.[2] This essay speaks of "Adam I" – the human person as creator, builder, master of nature imposing his or her will on the world – and "Adam II", the covenantal personality, living in obedience to a transcendent truth, guided by a sense of duty and right and the will to serve.

Adam I seeks success. Adam II strives for charity, love, and redemption. Adam I lives by the logic of economics – the pursuit of self-interest and maximum utility. Adam II lives by the very different logic of morality, where giving matters more than receiving, and conquering desire is more important than satisfying it. In the moral universe, success, when it leads to pride, becomes failure. Failure, when it leads to humility, can be success.

In that essay, first published in 1965, Rabbi Soloveitchik wondered whether there was a place for Adam II in the America of his day, so intent was it on celebrating human powers and economic advance. Fifty years on, Brooks echoes that doubt. "We live," he says, "in a society that encourages us to think about how to have a great career but leaves many of us inarticulate about how to cultivate the inner life."[3]

That is a central theme of Beha'alotecha. Until now we have seen the outer Moses, worker of miracles, mouthpiece of the Divine Word, unafraid to confront Pharaoh on the one hand, his own people on the other, the man who shattered the Tablets engraved by God Himself and who challenged Him to forgive His people, "and if not, blot me out of the book You have written" (Ex. 32:32). This is the public Moses, a figure of heroic strength. In Soloveitchik terminology, it is Moses I.

In Beha'alotecha we see Moses II, the lonely man of faith. It is a very different picture. In the first scene we see him break down. The people are complaining again about the food. They have manna but no meat. They engage in false nostalgia:

"We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic!"
(Num. 11:5)

This is one act of ingratitude too many for Moses, who gives voice to deep despair:

"Why have You treated Your servant so badly? Why have I found so little favour in Your sight that You lay all the burden of this people upon me? Was it I who conceived all this people? Was it I who gave birth to them all, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your lap, as a nursemaid carries a baby'?… I cannot bear all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how You treat me, kill me now, if I have found favour in Your sight, and let me not see my own misery!"
(Num. 11:11-15)

Then comes the great transformation. God tells him to take seventy elders who will bear the burden with him. God takes the spirit that is on Moses and extends it to the elders. Two of them, Eldad and Medad, among the six chosen from each tribe but left out of the final ballot, begin prophesying within the camp. They too have caught Moses' spirit. Joshua fears that this may lead to a challenge to Moses leadership and urges Moses to stop them. Moses answers with surpassing generosity:

"Are you jealous on my behalf? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that He would rest His spirit upon them all!"
(Num. 11:29)

The mere fact that Moses now knew that he was not alone, seeing seventy elders share his spirit, cures him of his depression, and he now exudes a gentle, generous confidence that is moving and unexpected.

In the third act, we finally see where this drama has been tending. Now Moses' own brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, start disparaging him. The cause of their complaint (the "Ethiopian woman" he had taken as wife) is not clear and there are many interpretations. The point, though, is that for Moses, this is the "Et tu, Brute?" moment. He has been betrayed, or at least slandered, by those closest to him. Yet Moses is unaffected. It is here that the Torah makes its great statement:

"Now the man Moses was very humble, more so than any other man on Earth."
(Num. 12:3)

This is a novum in history. The idea that a leader's highest virtue is humility must have seemed absurd, almost self-contradictory, in the ancient world. Leaders were proud, magnificent, distinguished by their dress, appearance, and regal manner. They built temples in their own honour. They had triumphant inscriptions engraved for posterity. Their role was not to serve but to be served. Everyone else was expected to be humble, not they. Humility and majesty could not coexist.

In Judaism, this entire configuration was overturned. Leaders were there to serve, not to be served. Moses' highest accolade was to be called Eved Hashem, God's servant. Only one other person, Joshua, his successor, earns this title in Tanach. The architectural symbolism of the two great empires of the ancient world, the Mesopotamian ziggurat (the "tower of Babel") and the pyramids of Egypt, visually represented a hierarchical society, broad at the base, narrow at the top. The Jewish symbol, the menorah, was the opposite, broad at the top, narrow at the base, as if to say that in Judaism the leader serves the people, not vice versa. Moses' first response to God's call at the Burning Bush was one of humility: "Who am I, to bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Ex. 3:11). It was precisely this humility that qualified him to lead.

In Beha'alotecha we track the psychological process by which Moses acquires a yet deeper level of humility. Under the stress of Israel's continued recalcitrance, Moses turns inward. Listen again to what he says:

"Why have I found so little favour in Your sight…? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? … Where can I get meat for all these people? … I cannot carry bear these people alone; the burden is too heavy for me."

The key words here are "I," "me" and "myself." Moses has lapsed into the first person singular. He sees the Israelites' behaviour as a challenge to himself, not God. God has to remind him, "Is the Lord's arm too short"? It isn't about Moses, it is about what and whom Moses represents.

Moses had been, for too long, alone. It was not that he needed the help of others to provide the people with food. That was something God would do without the need for any human intervention. It was that he needed the company of others to end his almost unbearable isolation. As I have noted

elsewhere, the Torah only twice contains the phrase, lo tov, "not good," once at the start of the human story when God says: "It is not good for man to be alone," (Gen. 2:18), a second time when Yitro sees Moses leading alone and says: "What you are doing is not good." (Ex. 18:17) We cannot live alone. We cannot lead alone.

As soon as Moses sees the seventy elders share his spirit, his depression disappears. He can say to Joshua, "Are you jealous on my behalf?" And he is undisturbed by the complaint of his own brother and sister, praying to God on Miriam's behalf when she is punished with leprosy. He has recovered his humility.

We now understand what humility is. It is not self-abasement. A statement often attributed to C. S. Lewis puts it best: humility is not thinking less of yourself. It is thinking of yourself less.

True humility means silencing the "I." For genuinely humble people, it is God and other people and principle that matter, not me. As it was once said of a great religious leader, "He was a man who took God so seriously that he didn't have to take himself seriously at all."

Rabbi Yochanan said, "Wherever you find the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He, there you find His humility." (Megillah 31a). Greatness is humility, for God and for those who seek to walk in His ways. It is also the greatest single source of strength, for if we do not think about the "I," we cannot be injured by those who criticise or demean us. They are shooting at a target that no longer exists.

What Beha'alotecha is telling us through these three scenes in Moses' life is that we sometimes achieve humility only after a great psychological crisis. It is only after Moses had suffered a breakdown and prayed to die that we hear the words, "The man Moses was very humble, more so than anyone on earth." Suffering breaks through the carapace of the self, making us realise that what matters is not self-regard but rather the part we play in a scheme altogether larger than we are. Lehavdil, Brooks reminds us that Abraham Lincoln, who suffered from depression, emerged from the crisis of civil war with the sense that "Providence had taken control of his life, that he was a small instrument in a transcendent task."[4]

The right response to existential pain, Brooks says, is not pleasure but holiness, by which he means, "seeing the pain as part of a moral narrative and trying to redeem something bad by turning it into something sacred, some act of sacrificial service that will put oneself in fraternity with the wider community and with eternal moral demands." This, for me, was epitomised by the parents of the three Israeli teenagers killed in the summer of 2014, who responded to their loss by creating a series of awards for those who have done most to enhance the unity of the Jewish people – turning their pain outward, and using it to help heal other wounds within the nation.

Crisis, failure, loss, or pain can move us from Adam I to Adam II, from self- to other-directedness, from mastery to service, and from the vulnerability of the "I" to the humility that "reminds you that you are not the centre of the universe," but rather that "you serve a larger order."[5]

Those who have humility are open to things greater than themselves while those who lack it are not. That is why those who lack it make you feel small while those who have it make you feel enlarged. Their humility inspires greatness in others.

[1] David Brooks, The Road to Character, Random House, 2015.
[2] Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, The Lonely Man of Faith, Doubleday, 1992.
[3] David Brooks, The Road to Character, xiii.
[4] Ibid., 93.
[5] Brooks, ibid., p. 261.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

"The nation was 'kvetching' evilly in the ears of the Lord, and the Lord heard, and His anger inflamed" (Numbers 11:1)

Why is there a marked difference between God's reaction to the complaints recorded here in the Book of Numbers compared to His reaction to the Israelites' complaints in the Book of Exodus?

After all, merely three days after the splitting of the sea, they found only "bitter" waters to drink (Exodus 15:24), and God immediately – and without comment – provides Moses with the bark of a special tree that sweetens the waters.

Then, only 30 days after the exodus, upon their arrival at the Tzin Desert, they complain because they have no food (ibid., 16:1-3). God immediately – and without comment – provides the manna.

And finally, when they encamp in Rephidim, they again quarrel with Moses over their lack of water, God tells Moses to strike a large boulder at Horev with the same staff used to strike the Nile River and turn it into blood; this time water would flow from the rock (ibid., 17:1–7)!

And although Moses names this place "Testing and Strife" (Masa u'Meriva), what immediately follows is the successful war against Amalek, won for the Israelites by the Divine response to Moses' hands upraised in prayer to God.

How different is God's reaction to the similar complaints only one year later (see Numbers 1:1), when a fire consumes the edge of the camp and a plague results in mass graves. Why the change?

Rabbi Moshe Lichtenstein suggests that it is because the requests and complaints in Exodus were for the basic necessities of life: water, and bread. Although the Israelites should have had greater faith, one can hardly fault them for desiring their existential needs.

In our portion of Beha'alotcha however, they complain not about the scarcity of water, but about the lack of variety in the menu! The verse even introduces the subject by stating that the nation was kvetching evilly in the ears of God – without even mentioning what they were complaining about (Numbers 11:1). And it is for this unspecified complaint that God's fire flares.

After this punishment, the nation cries out, "Who will give us meat to eat?" and then continues with, "We remember the fish we ate for free in Egypt, and the cucumbers and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic; our spirits are dried up with nothing but manna before our eyes" (ibid., v. 4-6). What do they want – meat, or fish, or melons, or garlic?! All of the above for the sake of variety? That is what it seems to be!

God's response is also curious; He tells Moses to appoint 70 elders (ibid., v.16), and sends the Israelites quails to eat. They ask for meat and God gives them rabbis!? And while they eat the quail, they are smitten by the severe plague. Why are they complaining, and why is God so angry? And if, indeed, He is disappointed, even upset, by their finicky desires, why give in to their cravings? And why send them the 70 elders?

Herein lies the essential difference between the complaints in Exodus and Numbers. In Exodus, the nation had a clear goal; they were committed to the mission of becoming a kingdom of priests and a sacred nation, and were anxiously anticipating the content of that mission, a God-given doctrine of compassionate righteousness and moral justice which they must impart to the world.

In order to receive and fulfill their mission they had to live, and so they (legitimately) requested water and bread, survival food. If they did not survive, they would certainly not be able to redeem.

One year later, in Numbers, they had already received the Torah. And, since their necessities were provided for, they were complaining, kvetching, without having substantive issues about which to complain. And they had various gourmet cravings, from meat to garlic.

God understood that had they still been inspired by their mission, had they remained grateful for their freedom and the opportunity it would afford them to forge a committed and idealistic nation, they would not be in need of watermelons and leeks, foods that they themselves had never even tasted. They were

really searching for a lost ideal, for their earlier inspiration of becoming a holy nation and kingdom of kohen-teachers.

No wonder God was disappointed and angry. And so he sent them the quails, knowing that once they received it, they would cease craving for it, just as once they gained their freedom from Egyptian servitude they took their freedom for granted, and once they received the Torah at Sinai, the Torah lost its allure.

The Almighty therefore felt that it would be necessary for many religious role models – 70 wise and sensitive men – to hopefully become the adjutant generals under Moses, who would personally reach out to large numbers of Jews and recharge their batteries as members of a holy nation and a kingdom of kohen-teachers!

Rabbi Dr. Norman J. Lamm's Derashot Ledorot

A Definition of Anivut

Our sidra this morning introduces us, rather casually and incidentally, to one of the most important and highly celebrated virtues in the arsenal of religion – that of anivut. We read in today's portion, "And the man Moses was the most humble (anav me'od), above all the men that were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3). Whatever may be the particular translation of the Hebrew word anav, the idea that is usually imparted is that anivut is humility, a feeling by the individual that he lacks inner worth, an appreciation that he amounts to very little. Indeed, the author of Mesilat Yesharim, one of the most renowned works on Jewish ethics in all our literature, identifies the quality of anivut with shiflut – the feeling of inner lowliness and inferiority. According to this definition, then, the Torah wants to teach each of us to see ourselves in a broader perspective, to recognize that all achievements are very trivial, attainments mere boastfulness, prestige a silly exaggeration. If Moses was an anav, if he was humble and able to deprecate himself, how much more so we lesser mortals should be humble.

However, can this be the real definition of this widely heralded quality of anivut?

We know of Moses as the adon hanevi'im, the chief of all the prophets of all times, the man who spoke with God "face to face" (Exodus 33:11). Do the words, "And the man Moses was the most humble" mean that Moses himself did not realize this? Does the anivut of Moses imply that he had a blind spot, that he failed to recognize what any school child knows? Does a Caruso** have to consider himself nothing more than a choir boy, and an Einstein merely an advanced bookkeeper, in order to qualify for anivut? In order to be an anav, must one be either untruthful or genuinely inferior?

To a very great extent, modern psychology is concerned with the problem of inferiority. Deep down, people usually have a most unflattering appraisal of themselves. Many are the problems which bring them to psychologists and psychiatrists; yet all so often the underlying issue is the lack of self-worth. Are we, therefore, to accept the Jewish ethical prescription of anivut as an invitation to acquire an inferiority complex?

In addition, the definition of anivut as self-deprecation and humility does not fit into the context of today's sidra. The identification by the Torah of Moses as an anav is given to us as part of the story in which we learn of Aaron and Miriam, the brother and sister of Moses, speaking ill of Moses behind his back. They criticize him harshly because of some domestic conduct in his personal life. They are wrong, and they are punished by the Almighty. But what has all this to do with the humility of Moses? The substance of their criticism, namely, the domestic relations of Moses, is as unrelated to Moses' humility as it is to his artistic talents or his leadership ability.

Furthermore, the Talmud relates an exchange that is all but meaningless if we assume that anivut means humility. The Talmud (Sota 49a) tells us that when Rabbi Judah the Prince died the quality of anivut disappeared with him. When this was stated, the famous Rabbi Joseph disagreed. He said, "How can you say that when Rabbi Judah died anivut vanished? Do you not know that I am still here?" In other words – I am an anav!

Now, if anivut really means humility, does this make sense? Can one boast of his humility and still remain humble? Is it not of the essence of humility that one should consider that he possesses this virtue in himself?

It is for these reasons, and several more, that the famous head of the Yeshiva of Volozhin, popularly known as the Netziv, offers us another definition of anivut (in his HaAmek Davar) which, I believe, is the correct one. I would say that the definition the Netziv offers means, in English, not humility, but meekness. It refers not to self-deprecation but self-restraint. It involves not an untruthful lack of appreciation of one's self and one's attainments, but rather a lack of arrogance and a lack of insistence upon kavod, honor. To be an anav means to recognize your true worth, but not to impose the consequences upon your friends and neighbors. It means to appreciate your own talents, neither over-emphasizing nor under-selling them, but at the same time refraining from making others aware of your splendid virtues at all times. Anivut means not to demand that people bow and scrape before you because of your talents, abilities, and achievements. Anivut means to recognize your gifts as just that – gifts granted to you by a merciful God, and which possibly you did not deserve. Anivut means not to assume that because you have more competence or greater endowments than others that you thereby become more precious an individual and human being. Anivut means a soft answer to a harsh challenge, silence in the face of abuse, graciousness when receiving honor, dignity in response to humiliation, restraint in the presence of provocation, forbearance and a quiet calm when confronted with calumny and carping criticism.

With this new definition by the Netziv, the statement of Rabbi Joseph becomes comprehensible. When he was told that with the death of Rabbi Judah the Prince there was no more meekness left in the world, he replied with remarkable candor and truthfulness: You must be mistaken, because I, too, am meek. There is no boastfulness here – simply a fact of life. Some people are meek, some are not. If a man says, "I am humble," then obviously he is not humble; but if a man says, "I am meek," he may very well be just that. In fact, the Talmud tells us that Rabbi Joseph was at least the equal in scholarship of his colleague, Rabba, but that when the question arose who would head the great Academy in Babylon, Rabbi Joseph deferred to Rabba. And furthermore, all the years that Rabba was chief of the Academy, Rabbi Joseph conducted himself in utter simplicity, to the point where he did all his household duties himself and did not invite any artisan or laborer, physician or barber, to come to his house. He refused to allow himself the least convenience which might make it appear as if he were usurping the dignity of the office and the station occupied by his colleague Rabba. This is, indeed, the quality of meekness – of anivut.

And this meekness was the outstanding characteristic of Moses as revealed in the context of the story related in today's sidra. Here were Aaron and Miriam, both by all means lesser individuals than Moses, who derived so much of their own greatness from their brother, and yet they were ungrateful and captious and meddled in Moses' personal life. A normal human being, even a very ethical one, would have responded sharply and quickly. He would have confronted them with their libelous statement, or snapped some sharp rejoinder to them, or at the very least cast upon them a glance of annoyance and irritation. But, "The man Moses was the most meek, more so than any man on the face of the earth." Although aware of his spiritual achievements, of his role as leader of his people, even of his historical significance for all generations, Moses entertained no feelings of hurt or sensitivity, of injured kavod. There was in his character no admixture of pride, of arrogance, of harshness, of hyper-sensitivity. He had an utter lack of gall and contentiousness. He was, indeed, an anav, more so than any other individual on the face of the earth. And he was able to write those very words without self-consciousness! Hence he did not react at all to the remarks of his brother and sister. Therefore, God said that if Moses is such an anav that he does not defend himself against this offense, I will act for him!

The quality of anivut, as it has been defined by the Netziv, is thus one of the loveliest characteristics to which we can aspire. One need not nourish feelings of inferiority in order to be an anav. Indeed, the greater one is and knows one's self to be, the greater his capacity for anivut, for meekness. It is the person who pouts arrogantly and reacts sharply and pointedly when his ego is touched who usually reveals thereby feelings of inferiority and worthlessness, of deep shiflut. The individual who feels secure and who recognizes his achievements as real can afford to be meek, to be an anav.

For it is this combination of qualities – inner greatness and outer meekness – that we learn from none other than God Himself. The Talmud (Megilla 31a) put it this way: "Wherever your find mentioned the gedula, the greatness, of God, there also you will find mentioned His anivut." Thus, for instance, where we are told that God is mighty and awesome, immortal and transcendent, there too we learn that God is close to the widow and the orphan, the stranger and the sick, all those in distress, those overlooked, ignored and alienated from the society of the complacent. God's anivut certainly does not mean His humility or self-deprecation! It does mean His softness, gentleness, kindliness – His meekness.

Here, then, is a teaching of Judaism which we can ill afford to do without. When we deal with husband or wife, with neighbor or friend, with children or students, with subordinates or employees – we must remember that the harsh word reveals our lack of security, and the impatient rejoinder shows up our lack of self-appreciation and self-respect. It is only when we will have achieved real gedula, true inner worth and greatness, that we shall learn that remarkable, sterling quality of anivut.

Let us leave the synagogue this morning aware of that mutual, reciprocal relationship between greatness and meekness. If we have gedula let us proceed to prove it by developing anivut. And if we doubt whether we really possess gedula then let us begin to acquire it by emulating the greatest of all mortals, Moses, and the immortal Almighty Himself, and practice anivut in all our human relations. If this anivut does not succeed at once in making us truly great, it at least will offer us the dividends of a better character, a happier life, more relaxed social relations, and the first step on the ladder of Jewish nobility of character. *[Excerpted from Rabbi Norman Lamm's Derashot Ledorot: A Commentary for the Ages – Numbers, co-published by OU Press, Maggid Books, and YU Press; edited by Stuart W. Halpern]*

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

It Was Not the Cucumbers and Onions!

The pasuk says: "We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge, the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic" (Bamidbar 11:5). The people were ostensibly crying over the food that they missed while they were in the Wilderness. Rashi quotes the teaching of Chazal that they were not really crying over the fish, cucumbers, garlic and onions, but rather they were crying over "family matters." They were bemoaning the fact that they recently became forbidden in the arayos prohibitions.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky shares a very basic idea over here (as he does in two other places in his Chumash commentary). He asks, how do Chazal know this? The simple reading of the pasuk is that they were crying over food deprivation. Chazal say that rather than crying over food, they were really crying over the newly-given arayos prohibitions. There is no indication of such in the pasuk, so how do Chazal put words into the mouths of the Jews in the Wilderness that appear nowhere in the p'shuto shel Mikra?

Rav Yaakov answers that there is a concept in Torah interpretation called "PaRDeS". PaRDeS is an acronym which represents the Torah being understood on several different levels—the level of Pshat (simple interpretation), Remez (hidden allusion), Drash (homiletic exposition), and Sod (mystical interpretation). So too, he says, human beings need to be understood on different levels. When a person says something, it needs to be analyzed at the level of Pshat, at the level of Remez, at the level of Drush, and at the level of Sod. Many times, people don't really understand their own words on the subconscious level.

Sometimes something much deeper is really going on than the face value of someone's words. People don't really cry about fish and cucumbers—especially when they have mann falling from Heaven on a daily basis. The mann was the best food in the world. According to Chazal, it could taste like whatever the person consuming it desired. So obviously, no one's taste buds were being deprived by a lack of garlic or onions. Either through Ruach HaKodesh or some other means, Chazal realized that something much deeper than onions was motivating them over here. This is what Rav Yaakov calls "Klayos v'Lev" (literally kidneys and heart), which is a Rabbinic idiom for what we call the subconscious. In other words, they were not even aware themselves of what was really bothering them.

This occurs all the time with interpersonal relations—with our children, our spouses, our employees and our employers. Sometimes a person has a "fit" about something and we ask him, "Why are you having a fit about this? It is such a trivial issue (whatever it may be). Why are you having a fit about this?" Sometimes the answer is that something else is going on. It is not the onions. It is something else.

Rav Yaakov says the same thing in Parshas Lech Lecha. Lot said he wanted to separate from Avraham Avinu and go live in Sodom. Why did he say that he wanted to go live in Sodom? It was because "Sodom was a fertile lush valley" (Bereshis 13:10). Rashi there cites a Medrash Aggadah that Lot's real interest in moving to Sodom was because they were an immoral and licentious people. He desired to live in a region where the residents had an "everything goes" lifestyle.

Rav Yaakov asks the same question there: Why do Chazal attribute such amoral intentions to Lot? Where do Chazal see this motivation? Why not assume that Lot is going there to make a better living in the fertile region? Rav Yaakov explains the same idea: Lot was with Avraham Avinu. Not only was he with Avraham Avinu, which is a tremendous merit, but he made an economic fortune by virtue of having attached himself to Avraham. "Also, Lot, who went with Avram, had flocks, cattle, and tents." (Bereshis 13:5) So if he wanted to make a good living, he should have stayed with Avraham Avinu! Why then is Lot migrating to Sodom? The answer is that it is for some unverbalized reason. It is not for parnassah!

There is an old quip: "We say the Hagaddah, but we want the Kneidlach." It was the same thing over here: We say "Parnassah, paranassah," but it is not really parnassah. Now, Lot may not have even realized this himself. That is the nature of the PaRDeS of human conversation—there is Pshat, Remez, Drash, and Sod behind each of man's comments. Lot may not have fully understood what he was saying, and neither do we fully understand everything we say.

Sometimes we get upset about something. We need to ask ourselves, "Why am I so upset?" Sometimes we don't even realize it. "Why should this bother me so much? It is such a minor issue!" We need to ask ourselves: "What is really bothering me?" We see this by the cucumbers and onions. We see this by Lot. We always need to ask the question: What is really motivating us?

The Ish Moshe Was More Humble Than Any Adam

The Torah testifies: "And the 'Ish' Moshe was extremely humble, more so than any 'Adam' on the face of the earth" (Bamidbar 12:3). In Lashon HaKodesh, the word "Ish" (literally – 'man') always connotes a distinguished individual, a person who has accomplished something important in his life. The word Adam (also meaning 'man') connotes any human being.

Rav Nissan Alpert, zt"l, points out that this pasuk apparently lacks symmetry. Rather than comparing the 'Ish' Moshe with any 'Adam', the pasuk should have used the plural of the word 'Ish' (Anashim) and state that the Ish

Moshe was humbler than any Anashim on the face of the earth.

Rav Nissan Alpert explains that the pasuk is telling us that Moshe Rabbeinu was haIsh Moshe—the most accomplished person in the world, an Ish haElokim. He had what to be haughty about! And yet, he was humbler than even the simplest unaccomplished Adam anywhere in the world!

The Gemara (Sotah 5a) says that a person should learn a lesson from his Creator. The Holy One Blessed be He abandoned all the higher peaks in the world and had His Presence descend onto a relatively lowly mountain upon which He gave His Torah (i.e. – Mt. Sinai).

The Kotzker Rebbe once asked, if the Almighty wanted to teach us humility, why didn't He give the Torah in a valley? The answer is that true humility occurs when someone has something to brag about and nevertheless remains humble. Hashem gave the Torah on a mountain. If someone is a nothing (e.g. – a valley) and does not act haughty about it, that is no big deal. However, when a person has what to be gayvedik about (for example, a mountain) and nevertheless remains humble, that is a big deal! Therefore, the Almighty gave the Torah on a mountain, but on a humble mountain.

Similarly, that is why there is a principle that the Divine spirit of prophecy descends upon people who are strong, wealthy, wise, and tall. What is the reason for that? It is because the Ribono shel Olam wants people to remain humble, despite having qualities that can legitimately cause them to be proud, or even haughty.

Dvar Torah
Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Aharon was great because he never changed. In Parshat Behaalotecha the Torah tells us about the great privilege that Aharon the High Priest had to kindle the menorah. Following the instruction given to Aharon, the Torah says (Bamidbar 8:3) "Vayaas ken Aharon." – "Aharon did it."

It's quite an astonishing statement! Of course he did it! Would he think of doing anything else? And then Rashi on Bamidbar 8:3 cites the words of the midrash:

"Lehagid shifcho shel Aharon, shelo shinah." – "The Torah tells us this as praise for Aharon to let us know that he never changed."

What exactly is meant here by the words 'he never changed,' and why is it so praiseworthy for Aharon the High Priest to carry out the will of Hashem? Surely no other thought could have crossed his mind?

The Sfat Emet gives a beautiful peirush here: Usually when one starts to perform a deed, even if it is an enormous privilege, in the course of time you'll start to get used to it and the original enthusiasm is likely to wane. However, that never happened with regard to Aharon.

On the first day, when he had that privilege of kindling the menorah, he was full of excitement and passion, and that never changed – 'lo shinah!' Throughout the entire time that he was the High Priest, every time he kindled that menorah, he had the same enthusiasm as that which he had on the very first day.

The message of this Torah passage is, I believe, of particular relevance today at a time when sadly, in some quarters, there is apathy. If that was the case in pre-Covid times, how much more so is it the case now that hopefully the pandemic is behind us?

We need to follow in the footsteps of Aharon, to maintain that level of passion. What an enormous privilege we have – to have the Torah to inspire and guide us always!

Let us therefore guarantee that the natural enthusiasm and passion of Aharon will be part of our lives forever.

Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel
Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*

Individuality and Conformity

In this week's Parsha, there is a verse that in the 21st century might seem like an obvious law: there is only law, the same law for every person in Jewish (Numbers 9:14) world. This is repeated later, emphasizing one law for every person in Jewish society (Numbers 15:15-16). However, if we understand that the Torah was given in an age where most laws for commoners did not apply equally to the wealthy, this is a pretty astonishing verse. In addition, this concept also applied to the kings and heads of state, which is cited by many, as the first time in history that leaders were subject to the same laws as everyone else in a society, the foundation of a true democracy, as explained in the Talmud (Gittin 83a). On the other hand, it seems from this verse that there is little room for individuality within the context of Jewish law. The right and prerogative to be an individualist are cherished in a free democratic society, whether about dress, thoughts, or actions. How much does Judaism encourage conformity and how much does it allow for individuality?

Individuality as a Goal Of Judaism - The Talmud (Bava Metzia 84a) records a story that occurred right after the death of Resh Lakish, the close friend and study partner of Rabbi Yochanan, whose arguments with Resh Lakish are recorded on hundreds of pages in the Talmud. Rabbi Yochanan was naturally saddened and depressed about the loss of his colleague (also his brother-in-law), so the other Rabbis sent over some of the best and brightest young scholars to learn with him. They heard a Shiur, a class in Judaism, from Rabbi Yochanan, and, at its conclusion, applauded Rabbi Yochanan's erudition and genius by citing support for his arguments from other sources. Instead of being happy upon receiving the compliments, Rabbi Yochanan suddenly became angry and cried out for the "son of Lakisha" (Resh Lakish), desirous of the heated arguments they had waged in the past. Rabbi Yochanan claimed that Resh Lakish would shoot down Rabbi Yochanan's ideas with 24 objections, which he would then answer in return. Rabbi Yochanan was not satisfied with the scholars *because they agreed with him* (i.e., they conformed), and desired instead the arguments and individual reasoning of Resh Lakish. This story supports the importance of individuality in Jewish learning and thought.

This incident, however, might be just a story and not the normative view in Judaism. Are there other statements to support this view of individualism in Jewish learning? The Talmud (Taanit 8a) says that each scholar is called upon, as an individual with individualistic ideas, to sharpen the mind of fellow scholars through disagreements and debates. Each page of the Talmud is filled with arguments between Rabbis, who differed in their thoughts and ideas from others. Thus, individual thought and opinion are certainly encouraged and even needed to produce proper Jewish learning.

The importance and acceptability of individuality in Judaism can also be seen from a Talmudic statement (Berachot 58a) that speaks about the people of Israel and says that just as the face of each Jew is different from all others, so, too, their opinions are each different from all other Jews. Even the leaders of the Jewish people were individualistic in style. Though God appeared to all the Prophets with essentially the same message for the people, each prophet prophesied in his or her individual style (Sanhedrin 89a).

Other Midrashic sources show that individuality is at the very essence of being a Jew. There are three classical names in the scripture for the person who today is called a Jew: *Hebrew, Israelite,* and *Jew*. The first Jew, Abraham, was called a Hebrew (Genesis 14:13) because, according to the Midrash (Midrash Beraishit Rabbah 42:8), the term signifies that, regarding belief and action, the entire world was on one side while Abraham was on the other side (*Ever*). Abraham's actions and beliefs separated him from all others. The name *Israel* was given to Jacob after he fought the Angel of God (Genesis 32:29). Through this name change, he was thus transformed from Jacob, which means "following on the heels of another," to *Israel*, which signifies, "wrestled with God." This transformation might be understood as a change within Jacob from a follower, a conformist, into a leader, an individualist.

Finally, the most common name used today, Jew, was first used in its present context

regarding Mordechai in the Purim story. Until that time, the term "Jew" (*Yehudi*) was a description of a person from the tribe of Judah. When the Megillah (Megillat Esther 2:5) described Mordechai, who the verse says was from the tribe of Benjamin, also as a *Yehudi* (Jew), the Midrash (Esther Rabbah 6) naturally asks what the meaning of this term is. Among the answers given, Mordechai was thus described because he was an individualist, refusing to follow the norms of the Persians and bow down to Haman. The term *Yehudi*, says the Midrash, comes from the Hebrew *Yechidi*, an individualist. Therefore, it can be seen that all three Biblical names for the term Jew describe, in some fashion, the characteristic of individuality.

And Yet, Conformity Is a Central Aspect Of Judaism - Seems To Take an *Opposite* Viewpoint, With "One Statute for all," "One Law" and "One Ordinance." The Jewish People Are Thus Admonished To Conform. The Torah's Logic in Taking This View Is Easy To Understand. It Cannot Be Left to the Individual To Decide, for Example, on Which Day of the Week To Keep the Shabbat, Just as the Individual Rituals of the Shabbat or any Jewish Holiday Cannot Be Arbitrarily Decided by Each Jewish Man or Woman. Failure of Jews To Conform to Basic Principles and Actions Would Inhibit or Obstruct any Sense of Jewish Community or Unified Religion.

How, then, can the apparent contradiction be resolved? How can the Torah's apparent stress upon conformity remain congruent with sources stressing Jewish individuality? Is it possible for the Jew to conform and yet remain an individualist?

Conformity While Maintaining Individuality - One possible solution lay in distinguishing between Jewish action and Jewish thought. While traditional Jews did and needed to conform to basic Jewish practice, individual opinion was never stifled. Shulchan Aruch codified Jewish practice for all Jews, but the Talmud and its varied opinions continue to be studied and debated. This distinction between thought and action can readily be seen in the procedures of the Sanhedrin, the body of Rabbis who decided in Temple times new questions of Jewish law that arose.

The 71 Sanhedrin members debated at length any particular law in question. In the debate, the individuality of thought was not only tolerated but was encouraged as part of the procedure. The Mishna (Sanhedrin 36b) tells us that the Sanhedrin was organized in a semi-circle (as is the Israeli Knesset-Parliament today), and any debate involving life and death issues started from the side (Sanhedrin 32a). This meant that the youngest and most inexperienced Sanhedrin members would *have* to express their opinions first. This was mandated by law, so that the more respected elders could not stifle individual and differing opinions by speaking earlier in the debate and causing the younger members to be intimidated and refrain from disagreeing. Thus, individuality in thought was certainly encouraged. However, once the Sanhedrin voted and the law was decided by a majority of members, the law was adopted and applied equally to all of Israel and all Sanhedrin members. Everyone had to conform. If a member of the Sanhedrin did not conform after the law was decided, but, rather, insisted on putting his original opinion into practice, he was known as *Zaken Mamre (*Deuteronomy 17:11-12*)*, a rebellious Elder, and would be put to death (Deuteronomy 17:11-12). Therefore, while individual thought was tolerated and certainly encouraged, conformity of action was also demanded.

Within this framework, it can be shown that traditional Judaism even “tolerates” a total questioning of God, Mitzvot-commandments, and religion, as long as the person continues to conform and perform the commandments while questioning. This unique religious concept, i.e., the primacy of the individual's right to think and question as long as conformity to general practice continues, can be seen in a unique passage (Jerusalem Talmud, Chagiga 6b) which says God prefers that Jews who abandon Him as long as they do not abandon observance of the Torah. The implication is that Jewish belief and Jewish thought are secondary to Jewish practice and that what one thinks and questions is tolerated as long as practice continues. (Of course, the idea is that both thought and action should coincide)

There is another approach that accommodates both the forces of conformity and individuality with traditional Judaism. The individual Jew does conform to Jewish practice, but, at the same time, he or she can retain his or her individuality within that conformity. As long as Jews conform to the *minimum* standard of performance or action, there is ample room for variety and individuality within compliance to those standards. A few obvious examples will demonstrate this concept.

While traditional Jews pray three times daily the same basic prayer, the *Amidah* or *Shmoneh Esreh*, conforming to the same text in each and every service, this text serves as a *minimum* of prayer. There is room for individual prayer within the *Amidah* itself, both in style, language, and wording. Within each individual blessing of the *Amidah*, such as the blessing for the sick, for example, one may add a personal, applicable thought about someone close who may be sick. In the seventeenth of the nineteen blessings, a general blessing known as *Shema Koleinu*, each person is encouraged to add a personal prayer about *any subject in any language (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 119:1). Thus, within the conformity, there is room for individuality.

Anyone who enters a traditional synagogue on the first morning of the Sukkot holiday will see many Jews with the four species. While Jewish law is very specific in defining what is an acceptable *Lulav, Etrog, Hadas* and *Arava*, beyond this minimum standard to which everyone must conform, one can readily see the four species in many shapes, sizes, and colors, all conforming to basic Jewish law. Each person picks out a unique set which suits *him or her* that they think is particularly beautiful as defined by tradition. This is also true of the Sukkah itself. There are very specific standards of conformity in defining a kosher Sukkah, in the manner it is constructed and what may be used as the covering (*Sechach*). The Talmud in tractate Sukkah spends many pages discussing these intricacies. Yet, beyond this conformity, a Jewish family is free to construct and decorate a Sukkah that suits individual preference (the walls, for example, can be made of almost any material).

This same concept -- individuality within the framework of conformity -- can be found in almost all areas of Jewish observance. The Shabbat Challah-bread comes in all shapes and sizes while conforming to a basic standard, as does the Shabbat wine cup and the wine itself. Many aspects of the Passover Seder give each family the opportunity to create a unique experience for that family, all within the standards of a traditional Seder that has been observed for thousands of years. The slight variations of customs and practices in each country, all within the traditional Jewish framework, show that individuality need not be sacrificed for Jewish conformity. The Chanukah Menorah, the Purim *Gragger* (noisemaker) and Havdalah service are but a few of the many examples demonstrating this concept, where individuality can be seen while conformity to basic standards is maintained.

Perhaps this duality -- individuality within conformity in Judaism -- can help best understand a Mishna (Mishna Sanhedrin 4:4) that asks why the Almighty created only one human being in creation and not a group of people. Among the answers cited in the Mishna, it states that unlike man's attempts at minting coins in which each and every coin, of necessity, is an exact duplicate of the original mold, God's mold for humanity, the first man, is different. While every subsequent human has many characteristics like the original, yet, at the same time, each person retains individual characteristic that make him or her a unique creature, different from that first mold. Thus, while normal people have two ears, eyes, and hands like the first man, each person possesses individual fingerprints, a voiceprint and other characteristics unlike anyone else's and a unique brain wave pattern. Beyond these physical traits, the Mishna may be indicating the dual nature of man, in that he must conform in certain aspects to all other human beings, but in other aspects, he retains his individuality and uniqueness.

*** This column has been adapted from a series of volumes written by Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel "*The Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*" available from Urim and Amazon. For the full article or to review all the footnotes in the original, contact the author at nachum@jewishdestiny.com**

Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

A Cloudy Voyage
Rabbi Nechemia Krakover

One of the greatest revolutions in recent years – one which has significantly impacted the way we travel – was the introduction of the navigation app, Waze. It has become such a crucial tool for anyone hitting the road that it is hard to imagine how we managed to find our way and get around before it entered our lives.

The fact that we are suddenly able to arrive at any destination anywhere in the world with no great difficulty has not only changed our perception of what it means to navigate, but has also revolutionized travel planning. However, every good thing has its drawbacks.

Although Waze has certainly made it easier to plan a trip and navigate to any given destination, it has undermined our ability to self-navigate, turning us into disoriented people with no sense of direction. So much so, that we often have no idea where we are. Even if we have travelled a road many times before, we no longer remember what the way is really like, nor are we truly familiar with the road.

The application which aims to help us find our way in any given place, has rendered us more dependent, less creative and less able to find our way.

This is not only the case when one sets out on a trip using a navigation app; it is also true of the voyage of life, and how we choose to navigate through it. On the one hand, the better the guidance and the more accurate the directions – the better our chances of reaching our desired destination. On the other hand, this dependency on external guidance and directions makes us less competent and takes away our sense of responsibility.

Good guidance can be defined as assistance that is meaningful, yet does not render the person on the receiving end impotent or incapable.

When it comes to education, this notion is all the more important. Educational wisdom is all about finding the equilibrium between giving guidance and leaving room for self-growth; offering assistance and granting independence. Educators have to know how to lead from behind, so to speak. Pointing the individual towards the paved road but still leaving open options and undetermined factors along the way, such that the individual is always presented with growing opportunities that will teach them that it is more rewarding to get to one's destination by making an effort.

Our portion depicts this very process.

Parshat Bechukotai gives a detailed account of the Israelites' wanderings in the desert, a voyage led by a pillar of cloud. It was the cloud that determined the walking pace and the distance that would be covered each time; it was the cloud that decided where the people would camp, and when they would set out again on their journey. However, although the cloud led the way, there was always an element of surprise. The people never knew in advance when they would journey ahead and when they would be told to stop and set up camp. Every time there was some sort of change, the people had to cope with the "cloud's decision", so to speak. Furthermore, the cloud, by its very nature, made it impossible for anyone to see the road ahead. In fact, the Israelites' journey across the desert was a foggy and unclear one.

Why did God choose to lead His people through the wilderness in this fashion? Why did it have to be in the midst of a cloud, with great uncertainty and no clear horizon?

The answer to this is that the purpose of the journey was not only to reach a specific destination; rather, the voyage in itself was meaningful, in that it taught the People of Israel to take responsibility and make an effort, instead of simply relying on Divine guidance.

Journeys interwoven with trials and tribulations make for stronger travelers. Complexity and hardship bring to surface hidden strengths. Uncertainty evokes great faith.

The People of Israel were required to have more than just faith in their leader, Moshe, or even in God Almighty Himself. First and foremost, they had to have some faith in their own strengths and capabilities. These, in turn, would not only enable them to cope with the unknown, but would help them grow from the cloudy uncertainty.

With the right perspective, uncertainty can produce people of great magnitude and faith – so much more so than humdrum days and regular routine ever could.

If we only allow our educational path to be strewn with islands of uncertainty, we have a better chance of letting our students' innermost strengths break surface. This would not only be a blessing to them, but the entire world would benefit by it.

But all on condition that we, too, are ready to have faith, to be on a constant learning curve, and, more importantly – to know when to let go…

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg

The Opportunity to Serve

In the beginning of Parshas Behaloscha, Hashem commands Moshe to tell Aharon to light the menorah, and the posuk says that Aharon did as he was told. "Vaya'as kein Aharon - Aharon did so; toward the face of the menorah he kindled its lamps just as Hashem had commanded Moshe" (8:3). Rashi comments that the extra words "vaya'as kein Aharon" reveal how praiseworthy Aharon was, that he did not change - "shelo shinah". Why is this so remarkable? Would we actually think that Aharon would light the menorah differently than he was told?

The Sfas Emes (5635) suggests that normally when a person does something for the first time, he feels exhilarated. But if he continues to perform the same action, his initial excitement will eventually wear off and the action will become more mechanical. The Torah is teaching that Aharon never changed in his performance of the mitzvah. Each time he kindled the menorah, he did so with the same enthusiasm he had the first time he fulfilled the mitzvah.

This attitude is important not just for lighting the menorah, but for all mitzvos. The posuk says, "On this day Hashem, your G-d, commands you to observe these decrees and laws" (Ki Savo 26:16). Rashi explains that the Torah uses the phrase "on this day" to highlight that "each day it should be in your eyes like something new." We should view mitzvah observance not as a burdensome obligation but as an exciting endeavor. The Torah alludes to this concept many times (see Rashi on Yisro 19:1, Va'eschanan 6:6 and Eikev 11:13).

In his introduction to the sefer Mesillas Yesharim, the Ramchal writes that one of the critical components of an ideal avodas Hashem is shleimus haleiv - serving Hashem with a full heart, as the posuk says "to serve Hashem with your entire heart" (Eikev 10:12.) This involves, among other things, performing mitzvos with heartfelt devotion, not just as a mitzvas anashim m'lumadah (Yeshaya 29:13) - doing mitzvos robotically, out of habit. A true oveid Hashem is one who observes mitzvos out of love, not just because he is obligated to do so. He puts his full heart into every mitzvah because he feels excited to be involved in its performance no matter how many times he has already done that mitzvah.

Such an attitude seems somewhat attainable in the realm of Torah study. The posuk says, "And it will be if you will surely listen - shamo'a tishma..." (Eikev 11:13). Chazal (Sukka 46b) explain that the Torah uses the double language of shamo'a tishma to hint to the fact that if you listen to the old, then you will also listen to the new. Rashi explains that this means if you review your old studies, then you will hear anew because you will arrive at a

deeper understanding of the old teachings ("tischakeim bo lehavin devarim chadashim mitoch devarim yeshanim"). Each time a person reviews words of Torah, he discovers additional layers of meaning hidden within them. This revelation can be quite an enlightening experience and it can bring a person to a newfound sense of joy and excitement for talmud Torah.

But how can one maintain a sense of hischadshus - a feeling of freshness and exuberance - in mitzvos like tefilla, berachos, tefillin and tzitzis after observing these very same mitzvos day after day? How was Aharon Hakohein able to feel a heartfelt enthusiasm each time he lit the menorah?

The answer lies in another statement of Chazal about Aharon. Rashi, earlier in the parsha (8:2), quotes from the Midrash Tanchuma that the parsha of lighting the menorah is placed next to the parsha which describes the korbanos that the nesi'im brought at the inauguration of the Mishkan because when Aharon saw the nesi'im bringing korbanos he felt discouraged since neither he nor his shevet were included in this effort. Hakadosh Boruch Hu told him, "Your role is greater than theirs because you kindle and prepare the lights of the menorah."

Why was Aharon upset in the first place? After all, if Hashem did not ask of him to bring a korban, then wasn't he exempt? Why should there be any reason for distress? What's more, Aharon actually did bring his own special korbanos at the inauguration of the Mishkan (see the beginning of Parshas Shemini). So why did he feel left out just because he was not also included in the korbanos of the nesi'im? The answer is that Aharon was never satisfied with simply fulfilling his spiritual obligations. He cherished the opportunity to serve Hashem. That is why he felt upset when he was excluded from the special korbanos of the nesi'im.

For the same reason, Aharon felt a newfound excitement each time he lit the menorah because when a person appreciates that serving Hashem is a privilege, then it never gets stale. Each mitzvah is an opportunity to connect with Hashem, the Giver of the mitzvah, and to be elevated in the process. If a person sees a mitzvah as a gift - no less than the gift of a spouse or a close friend - he will perform that mitzvah with exuberance and devotion each and every time, showing attention to every detail, savoring every moment that he is involved in the mitzvah, because he understands that mitzvos are not just obligations but they are really Hashem's expression of love for Klal Yisrael and they are opportunities not to be squandered.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah
by Rabbi Label Lam

Encouragement!

HASHEM said to Moshe saying, “Speak to Aaron and say to him: When you “light-up” the lamps, toward the face of the Menorah shall the seven lamps cast light.” Aaron did so- (Bamidbar 8:1-2) Aaron did so: To tell the praise of Aaron that he did not change. (Rashi)

What’s so great that Aaron lit the lights? Anybody could do that! Why would he do differently than what he understood perfectly what HASHEM had instructed him to do? If any one of us understood with that level of clarity what it was that HASHEM wants us to do, would we, could we do otherwise?! So, what’s the great praise about? He did what he was supposed to do!

Now it is occurring to me that it is not only we who are hearing about the praise of Aaron for not having deviated from HASHEM’s instructions, but it is in order to praise Aaron for not changing, to tell the praise of Aaron to Aaron. Aaron is being praised for doing the right thing. How does that help? It helps a lot!

I was shown at a Shiva call just last night a moving video clip of my good friend Shimi who just passed away. There he is in a hospital room in Israel, hooked up to wires and looking frail. A troubadour of musicians with guitars are serenading him.

He’s singing along and at one point he even stands up and with great effort begins dancing with them. Then he starts to tell them what a great thing they are doing by coming and performing for him.

“Doctors are prescribing all kinds of medicine that we hope will be effective, but this is the best medicine of all that you are doing here for me today.” He continues to heap praise on them and thank them in multiple ways, and he tells them that he is having this little Chizuk session videoed so he can send it to their families so they can see how much good they are doing.

They were coming to give him courage and strength and he was feeding them. It was truly amazing! He was truly amazing! He recognized that everybody needs encouragement, even people who know that what they are doing is the right thing. Why not!?

The guy sweeping the floor needs encouragement. The gabbai of the Shul needs encouragement! Teachers need encouragement. Doctors need encouragement. Principals need encouragement. Husbands need encouragement. Wives need encouragement. Parents need encouragement. Kids need encouragement. The Rav of the community needs encouragement. Elderly people need encouragement. The mailman needs encouragement. The grocer needs encouragement. The Baal Koreh needs encouragement. The cab driver needs encouragement. Everybody needs encouragement! Even Aaron HaKohain needs encouragement.

He had been involved incidentally and tangentially in the Chet HaEgel and he was feeling embarrassed by all the pomp and pageantry involved with the inauguration of the Mishkan. He was assuming that he was excluded because of his association with that cosmic- national disaster.

When he was called upon to light the Menorah, which would be the crowning event, he felt woefully unworthy and he was ready to hide behind his deep sense of shame and excuse himself with good reason. “I am not worthy of such an honor.” “And Aaron did so…” He did what he was commanded to do. It was not a small thing and HASHEM, Who reads the heart of men, let Aaron know that, it wasn’t easy but he did the right thing. Even people who know they are doing the right thing need words of encouragement. Certainly, people who have doubts about themselves need encouragement.

I saw a phrase like this and I believe it describes all of us; “I can be both a masterpiece and a work in progress!” The “masterpiece” part of us is need of being recognized. We cannot demand that attention but since we recognize the need, we might as well identify it in others. The “work in progress” part of us is in constant need of encouragement. We cannot command it, but since we recognize the need, we might as well give as much as we can to others, encouragement!

Mizrachi Dvar Torah

Rav Doron Perz - The Sinai Generation

How can it be that the generation that came out of Egypt, saw all the great miracles, spent a whole year at Mount Sinai, who are about to enter the Land, reach such low depths?

They begin inexplicably complaining - they moan about how wonderful it was in Egypt. Then, the entire generation was wiped out in the desert. In fact, Rabbi Akiva says that they fell so low that the generation has no place in the World to Come!

You can be in the best environment, have the greatest teachers - but there may be some personal reasons why you may not be able to internalize those teachings.

There was something impeding their ability to remain at the level of Mount Sinai and caused them to fall to the greatest depths.

We must utilize the opportunities that we have - not blame those around us - because ultimately the choice is ours. It is up to us!

BS"D

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Parshas Behaaloscha

Two Approaches for Staying Enthusiastic About Mitzvos

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: #1296 Should You Daven for the Same Choleh Over and Over Again? Good Shabbos.

Two Approaches for Staying Enthusiastic About Mitzvos

There is a famous Rashi at the beginning of Parshas Beha'alosecha which we comment on almost every year. Aharon was given the mitzva of lighting the Menorah every day in the Beis HaMikdash. The Torah says: "And Aharon did so, toward the face of the Menorah he kindled its lamps, as Hashem had commanded Moshe." (Bamidbar 8:3) Rashi comments on the words "And Aharon did so" that "This is stated to tell the praise of Aharon in that he did not deviate." On a simple level, Rashi is saying that this pasuk is a testimony to Aharon that he did not change what he was supposed to do. Everybody asks on this Rashi, what else would we expect of Aharon? Of course he did not deviate!

In past years, we quoted the famous vort of the Sefas Emes (Rav Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter, 1847-1905). This year we are sharing a vort from the Ishbitzer Rebbe (Rav Mordechai Leiner, 1801-1854), which also tries to understand this Rashi, but has a totally different take on this question.

The Sefas Emes says that when a person does something over and over again, by the thousandth time, it becomes a little monotonous and the person loses his enthusiasm. This is the time of year when schools let out for the summer. If you look at children coming into school on the first day of school in September or you look at the teachers on the first day of school, you can see an excitement and a passion for learning. However, in June, you can see the proverbial "child running away from school." Why? Because it has become "Same old, same old… Day in, day out, same thing." That is the way it is with people. If you ever see a Bar Mitzvah bochur putting on Tefillin for the first time, you see how carefully he wraps the straps around his arm to make sure that they are equidistant from each other and so on and so forth. After a person puts on Tefillin for thirty or forty years, his level of meticulousness is not the same. That is the way people are. Enthusiasm wanes.

The Sefas Emes explains that this is what Rashi is saying. The Torah states the praise of Aharon that no matter how long or for how many years he lit the Menorah, his enthusiasm for the mitzvah never waned.

The Ishbitzer, on the other hand, says that the word "sheenah" (in Rashi's expression "melamed shelo sheenah") can mean something else. It can mean that Aharon never did it the same way twice. He didn't repeat. Each day he had a different kavannah (intent and focus) when he lit the Menorah. The hadlakas haMenorah of yesterday was not the same as the hadlakas haMenorah of today and tomorrow will yet again be a different hadlakas haMenorah.

These are two different approaches to Rashi, but the similarity is that either there was a tremendous enthusiasm which did not wane, or there was newness with every single lighting of the Menorah that introduced a new kavannah with each new day.

We just finished Parshas Nasso, the longest parsha in the Torah. It is not, however, the hardest parsha in the Torah because a good part of it is just repetition. Everyone asks why the Torah needs to repeat the offering of each nasi (prince), even though they were identical to the offerings of the previous day's nasi. The answer is that even though it was the same offering, each nasi had a special kavannah.

We can relate to that, because we know that for different folks there are different strokes. Each person thinks in his own unique way. But it is perhaps even more noteworthy for the same person, doing the same thing over and over again, to have a unique kavannah each time. That is the praiseworthy attribute of Aharon haKohen.

The "Shame" of Not Bringing the Korban Pesach During the Forty Years in the Wilderness

The Torah states: "Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the second year from their exodus from the land of Egypt, in the first month, saying: The Children of Israel shall make the Pesach offering in its appointed time." (Bamidbar 9:1-2). We are talking here about the first month, Nissan, in the year after the Exodus.

This is strange because Parshas Bamidbar, which we read two weeks ago, clearly takes place one month later, in the "second month," Iyar, also one year after the Exodus. Why is the Torah going back in time from Iyar to Nissan? Rashi comments on this and cites this as an example of his well-known principle that the Torah is not necessarily written in chronological order (ayn mukdam u'me'uchar b'Torah).

Rashi advances a theory as to why the Torah does not begin Sefer Bamidbar with the mitzvah to bring a Korban Pesach (which is first mentioned here, in Beha'alosecha). Rashi says that this matter was "genusan shel Yisrael" (of an unseemly nature for Israel) in that throughout the entire forty years in the Midbar (Wilderness), this was the only Pesach offering that they brought. The Torah did not wish to emphasize or highlight that fact.

Tosfos in Maseches Kiddushin (37b) asks, what is so unseemly about this? After all, they were not commanded to bring the Korban Pesach until they arrived in Eretz Yisrael! It is not "genusan shel Yisrael" that we do not sit in a Succah in June! There is no mitzvah to sit in a Succah in Sivan so there is absolutely nothing unseemly about not doing so. Likewise, Klal Yisrael were given a mitzvah to bring a Korban Pesach on the second year of the Exodus and then not to bring it again until they reached Eretz Yisrael. What, Tosfos asks, is so unseemly about that?

Tosfos answers that the "genusan shel Yisrael" was the fact that the aveiros (sins) of Israel caused them to wander in the Midbar for forty years until they reached Eretz Yisrael. Had they not sinned, eleven days later they would have been in Eretz Yisrael and would indeed have once again brought the Korban Pesach the following Nissan.

The Maharal in Gur Aryeh asks Tosfos' question and offers a different answer. He says that even when someone is excused from doing a mitzvah, it is still genai hu lo (an unseemly matter for him). The bottom line is that they did not do the mitzvah for all the many years when they were in the Midbar. Even if a person is an anus (he can't help himself) and he has all the excuses in the world and he wasn't supposed to bring the Korban Pesach, nevertheless that is not a good situation. There is no blame and there is no punishment but nevertheless, the mere fact that he did not fulfill the mitzvah is a genus.

The Chidushei HaRim, the first of the Gerer Rebbes, offers yet a different answer to this question. Parshas Beha'alosecha also includes the story of the people who were tameh (impure) and couldn't bring the Korban Pesach on the 14th of Nissan. They came before Moshe and complained "…Why should we be left out by not offering Hashem's offering in its appointed time among the Children of Israel?" (Bamidbar 9:7) Basically, they claimed that it was not fair that they who were tameh for legitimate reasons (carrying the coffin of Yosef), should not be able to participate in the national enterprise of offering the Korban Pesach. It bothered them that they did not bring the Korban Pesach.

The Chidushei HaRim explains that the "genusan shel Yisrael" was that not offering the Korban Pesach for the balance of the forty years in the Midbar apparently did NOT bother them! These people who carried Yosef's aron spoke up and asked the question "Why should we be left out?" What happened for the next forty years? Why didn't Klal Yisroel feel bad? That was the "Genusan shel Yisrael."

Sometimes a person is forced into situations where he just can't fulfill certain mitzvos. We shouldn't just have the attitude "Patur is patur!" The attitude should be "Why are we left out (Lamah neegara)?"

If a person comes home from shul on the second night of Sukkos and it is raining, the halacha is that he is patur from sitting in the Sukkah. Then suddenly one of the kids announces "The rain stopped!" They need to go into the Sukkah. He needs to wipe off the table and chairs. It is a mess. It is wet. It is damp. He thinks, "Well hold on. Maybe it will start raining again. Let's not jump the gun."

That should not be our attitude. Our attitude should be different. We should say, "It is raining? Why should we be deprived? Baruch Hashem, if it stops raining, we can go back into the Sukkah." When it bothers someone that he cannot fulfill a mitzvah, that is an indication of the value of the mitzvah to him.

We should all live and be well until 120 years, healthy and strong, all the way to the end. But sometimes a person cannot fast on Yom Kippur. There are two ways of looking at that. A person can think, "Yom Kippur is so long, I have never been able to concentrate fully on my davening because of my hunger pains. This too is for the best. The doctor says that I need to eat, so I will eat." That should not be our attitude. We should feel upset. "Why should I be deprived? I can't fast on Yom Kippur? I fasted my whole life on Yom Kippur! Lamah neegara?"

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion.

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Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky

Mitzvos: Obligation or Opportunity?

All of Torah was given to Moshe, who taught it to Klal Yisrael. There are however, two instances where a particular portion of Torah given to the Jewish people had the involvement of another party. One is the case of the 'mekosheish' (Bamidbar 15:32) who deserved the death penalty for desecrating Shabbos, but it was unclear which type of death penalty. The other instance was the case of the daughters of tzlafchad who sought clarification for the laws of inheritance regarding a daughter when there is no male child. In both those cases Chazal find it necessary to explain why it is that these people were the ones involved in bringing this particular teaching to Israel.

However, in this week's parsha we have something of a different magnitude, regarding people who could not bring a korbon Pessach because the Torah forbids those who are defiled from bringing it. These people did not inquire as to a mere clarification of the existing law, rather they demanded that they be given a new opportunity to fulfill this mitzvah. This brought into being a whole new mitzvah that had not previously been revealed at all; it was as if they had indeed succeeded in creating a new mitzvah. This is an extraordinary phenomenon, and some understanding of how and why this happened is needed.

Let us consider for a moment two different attitudes towards mitzvos. One observant Jew takes the Torah to be God's will and dictum and feels obliged to fulfill it. He fulfills it to the best of his abilities and to the full demands of the Torah, but he sees no reason to demand or want more of the Torah. He approaches mitzvos like all duties that we fulfill; one's job is to fulfill one's duty appropriately and all obligations ends with that. It seems that we have described a truly virtuous Jew.

However, in this parsha we have a sign of how sorely lacking the attitude described above is. Rashi quotes Chazal describing Klal Yisroel's departure from Sinai as a negative event. It is unclear why, but in a few places in the Midrash, and as quoted by rishonim, it states that it is, "because when Israel left Sinai, they ran away like a child running away from school". This cannot mean that they left Sinai before they were supposed to, for their movements and journey were very specifically coordinated by Hashem himself. When the divine cloud folded and began moving, that is when Israel began moving - not a minute before, and not a minute after. So what does it mean that they "ran away"? It means that they left exactly at the moment they were supposed to, but with a sense of relief that it's over. [Some versions of that above Chazal describe their departure as being, "like a child who leaves school and runs off.] This is an attitude towards Torah that expresses that Torah and its obligations are merely just that - obligations. Obligation that is, indeed, fulfilled meticulously, but nothing more than that.

One is not faulted for not demanding more obligation so long as one has fulfilled the obligation to perfection. But Torah is a lot more than obligation; it is opportunity as well. A person needs to see his sense of fulfillment and sense of self expressed in Torah. Every mitzvah performed, every part of Torah understood, builds the person bigger and better. This is in line with the words used by the people who were complaining about not being able to bring a korbon Pesach. They used the phrase, "lomo nigari - why are we losing out?". They did not see the mitzvah as a mere obligation, from which they had been duly exempted. Rather, they understood each and every mitzvah to be an additional brick in building a person b'tzalomo k'dmuso. Therefore, they came with a demand, and it was the demand itself that caused Hashem to give them a so-called "new" mitzvah. This could not have been given by Moshe, because then it would have simply been part and parcel of all other obligations. This mitzvah represented the quest for fulfillment that is the inner basis for mitzvos.

This is something that unfortunately becomes somewhat lost to us, when we speak about "Torah observant Jewry", when we speak of Orthodoxy. We toe the line, we follow the regulations, and we dot every "i" and cross every "t". Certainly, that is the beginning of Torah observance, for if a person takes Torah and mitzvos to be only spiritual fulfillment, and not obligation, he is missing the basis for it all. It is like someone who is law-abiding because he feels like it, which means in effect that he does not recognize the authority and the validity of the government. That is something that is negative.

We have one more example in this week's parshah, of someone who saw mitzvos as fulfillment in addition to obligation. It says that Aaron was upset that he did not participate in the consecration of the mishkan. He had done no wrong, for he was not commanded to bring any sacrifice; all the necessary sacrifices were duly brought by the nesiim. But Aaron saw mitzvos as opportunities rather than obligation only.

And that is why Hashem told him, "You will light the menorah as your act of dedication of the mishkan." Hashem then added, "Yours is greater than theirs, for yours will last eternally". The reason for that difference is that when a person is occupied with fulfilling obligations, it comes to an end at some point; when the obligation has been duly fulfilled, it is over. Not so the

person who yearns and seeks mitzvos, recognizing that they are building him and bringing out the best in him. For a person like that, the chain of mitzvos and opportunities is indeed eternal.

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from: Ira Zlotowitz <Iraz@klalgovoah.org>
"אֲנַחְנוּ טְמֵאִים לְנֶפֶשׁ אָדָם לָמָּה נִגָּרַע לְבִלְתִּי הַקְרִיב אֶת־קָרְבַּן"
"Although we were impure through a corpse why should we be worse off and left out from bringing the korban [pesach]" (Bamidbar 9:7)
Rashi explains that those who were unable to bring the korban pesach complained that they should have been allowed to sponsor a korban and have it sacrificed and eaten by those who were pure. The question is obvious; a sacrifice brought in such a manner does not fulfill the mitzvah of korban pesach. If so, what was the point in making this request of Moshe?
Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l explains that we learn from here that even if one is unable to fulfill a mitzvah in its fullest way, he should nevertheless involve himself in the mitzvah, thereby attaching himself to the mitzvah. For instance, even if one won't be able to sit in the succah, he should nevertheless be involved in the building of a succah. Although they would not fulfill the mitzvah of korban pesach through this suggested act, they sought to participate in some aspect of this mitzvah. Rav Moshe explains that we bless a child that he should grow into "Torah, chuppah, and ma'asim tovim". Rav Moshe explains that "ma'asim tovim", good deeds, refer to such acts which aren't necessarily fulfillment of a Torah obligation, but rather are deeds that one engages in out of love and reverence for mitzvos.

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Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog
The Torah instructs Aharon and through him all of his successors, the High Priests of Israel, that when lighting the great menorah one should make certain that the six outside lamps should all face into the center lamp. There are various opinions amongst the commentators as to how this was to be accomplished. The wicks were bent inwards or perhaps the lamps themselves were tilted towards the middle lamp - or it could have been that this was only one of the recurring miracles that defined the Mishkan and later the Temple in Jerusalem. These are just some of the ideas advanced to explain how this matter was in fact accomplished. The greater question obviously is what lesson is the Torah imparting to us by this instruction that the outside lamps should face the middle lamp. I think that the idea that the Torah wishes us to internalize is that the light of the holy menorah requires focus.
We know that in the physical world the more intense and concentrated the focus of the light, the greater is its ability to illuminate and reveal. Diffused light creates mood and atmosphere but it does not really show what lies before us. The light of the menorah is symbolic of Torah in Jewish life. Torah, its study, support and observance, requires focus and concentration. It cannot serve its true purpose in our lives when it exists amongst us only in a diffused and generalized sense. Our rabbis taught us what the focus of Jewish life is and should be: Torah, Godly service, human kindness and consideration for others. Other causes are only to be granted - diffused light - and they, by themselves, will not serve to erase the darkness of our existence and society. Every human life, every family, even every educational and commercial enterprise requires focus and concentration in order to be successful and productive.
We all have priorities in our lives. These priorities become the plans, actions and ideas that we focus our attention, talents and resources upon. Judaism demands that we focus upon love and study of Torah and its observances. We should concentrate upon our daily conversation, so too speak – our prayer services – with our Creator.
We are required to serve God and do His bidding. And that requires effort, sacrifice and devotion. It is perhaps the most challenging area of our religious life and demands total focus and concentration. Kindness towards others certainly requires focus. In theory, in a world of diffused light, we all subscribe to the notions of good behavior, social responsibility and charitable ideals. However when we are faced with the individual test of performing a specific human kindness to a specific human being we oftentimes shirk that responsibility. Our focus is not present and thus we are prevented, not out of malice but simply out of lack of concentration from performing the necessary act of kindness that lies before us. The lesson of the menorah is one of focus – the focus that will allow the spirit of Godliness to light our way through our lives.
Shabat shalom.
Rabbi Berel Wein

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from: The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust <info@rabbisacks.org>
subject: Covenant and Conversation
COVENANT & CONVERSATION
Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l
From Despair to Hope
BEHA'ALOTECHA
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks
There have been times when one passage in this week's parsha was, for me, little less than lifesaving. 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 okay." 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!" (Num. 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" (Brachot 5b). 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 the wise saying goes, popularly attributed to C. S. Lewis: 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."[3] 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.

[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.

[3] Pesikta Zutrata, Eikev.

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subject: Essay by Rabbi YY
date: Jun 8, 2023, 4:31 PM

Rabbi YY Jacobson

Essay Behaaloscha

Every Child Needs a Miriam

A Single Gesture Toward a Baby Reverberates Throughout History

June 4, 2015 |17 Sivan 5775

Class Summary:

Does your baby want to nurse every few hours to the point that you are completely exhausted? ...

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Miriam's Skin Disease

At the end of this week's portion (Behaaloscha), we catch a rare and fascinating glimpse into the interpersonal relationship of Moshe, his brother Aaron, and their sister Miriam.

Miriam, speaking to her brother Aaron, was critiquing Moses' marriage. The Torah is decidedly cryptic about what exactly she was criticizing, stating merely that "Miriam and Aaron spoke about Moses regarding the Cushite woman he had married[1]." There are various ways to explain what it was she said and who this Cushite woman was[2]. Whatever the case is, an older sister voicing criticism of her baby brother's marriage is easy enough to understand—even if that younger brother happens to be Moses himself.

G-d hears their conversation and decides to clarify to Aaron and Miriam who their younger brother is. He says to them: "Please listen to My words. If there are prophets among you, I make myself known to them only in a vision or a dream. Not so

is My servant Moses; he is faithful throughout My house. With him, I speak mouth to mouth… he beholds the image of the Lord. So how were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?"

G-d departs in a huff, and Miriam – and according to Rabbi Akiva in the Talmud[3], Aaron too—is left stricken with leprosy, the biblical punishment for slander. Moses then intervenes, crying out to G-d[4]: "I beseech you, G-d, please heal her!" G-d limits her affliction to seven days, that she (like all lepers) must spend in isolation outside the camp. Following these seven quarantined days, she would be healed and could reenter the camp. In the words of the Torah:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאָבִיהָ יָרֹק יָרַק בְּפָנֶיהָ הֲלֹא תִכָּלֵם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תִּסָּגֵר שִׁבְעַת יָמִים מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְאַחַר תֵּאָסֵף.

"She shall be quarantined for seven days outside the camp, and afterward can she re-enter."

The Torah finishes the story: "And the people did not travel until Miriam had re-entered."

The greatest biblical commentator, the 11th-century French sage, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, known as Rashi, quoting the Talmud[5], tells us that the nation waiting for Miriam was a unique honor conferred upon her in the merit of something she had done eight decades earlier. At the beginning of Exodus, Pharaoh decreed that all male Jewish children be drowned in the Nile Delta. Moses' mother had placed her infant Moses in a basket and had set him afloat in the Nile. It is here that Miriam debuts in biblical history: "His sister stood from afar, to know what would happen to him[6]." It is the merit of her waiting for Moses that the nation now waited for her.

Although the nation was ready to embark on the next leg of its journey, they stopped for seven days, waiting for Miriam who was quarantined outside of the camp, as a reward for her noble deed decades earlier when Moses was an infant floating in the river.

Would They Let Her Die?

Yet, upon deeper reflection, this explanation by Rashi is deeply disturbing.

Is the only reason the nation waited for Miriam, while she was quarantined for a week because she once waited for Moses as an infant? What was the alternative? Not to wait for Miriam and leave her alone in a parched and barren desert, without food, water, or any protection, a place the Torah describes[7] as "a desert great and awesome, full of snakes, vipers, scorpions, and drought, where there was no water?"

Suppose Miriam would have never watched over Moses as an infant. Would she have then not been rewarded this "honor" and left to die in the desert alone?

Equally disturbing is the expression Rashi uses that the Jewish people waiting for Miriam was an "honor" ("kavod") bestowed upon her. Yet, this was no honor; it was a matter of life and death. It is impossible for any human being, let alone an elderly woman (Miriam at that time was 87, being seven years older than Moses, who was 81 at the time), to survive alone in a dangerous desert.

And what happened to the other lepers expelled from the camp, who did not receive this special "honor" of the nation waiting for them? Were they simply abandoned to die whenever the people continued their journey?

The Camp

In an ingenuous presentation, the Lubavitcher Rebbe (in an address delivered on Shabbos Behaaloscha 1965[8]) presented the explanation.

We must draw attention to two words in the text. The verse states: "She shall be quarantined for seven days outside the camp (mechutz lamachaneh), and then she should reenter." Each word and expression in Torah is precise. The words "outside the camp" intimate that her exclusion and expulsion would be effective when the people are encamped; when they are dwelling in one place as a camp ("machaneh" in Hebrew means to dwell in one place, as in the term "vayachanu"), and she would remain outside of the camp.

Only if she is quarantined for seven days outside of the nation's dwelling when it constitutes a stationary "camp", would she fulfill her duty and would be able to heal and reenter the community.

What this meant was that travel time did not count for this seven-day quarantine period. Even if Miriam were to travel in isolation behind the rest of the nation, this would not be counted as part of her seven-day quarantine necessary for her healing and reentry, since she was not quarantined "outside the camp", because during their traveling the Jews did not constitute a "camp", a "machaneh."

Thus, if the nation would not have waited the seven-day period for Miriam, she would have certainly traveled along with them. But she would not have had the ability to go into isolation for seven days to heal until the nation would cease traveling and become a "camp" once again. This would have delayed her healing process as long as they were on the move.

This, then, was the special honor bestowed upon Miriam. By delaying their journey for seven days, Miriam could be quarantined immediately outside of the camp, and at the conclusion of the week, reenter the camp after a full recovery. Her leprosy would not linger for even one extra day. This was not a question of life and death; it was only a question of how long she would endure her malady.

81 Years Earlier

Why did Miriam deserve this honor?

Let us now go back 81 years earlier. Let us see what Miriam actually did for her baby brother Moses, and then we can begin to appreciate the spiritual dynamics of history – how all of our actions return to us: what we put out there comes back to us.

Picture the scene: The king of the country, the most powerful man on the planet, the leader of the most important civilization at the time, had decreed that all Jewish newborn boys must be drowned. Miriam's baby brother is one of those slated for death. Their mother had just sent the infant to his divinely ordained fate by letting him sail into the Nile, which happens to be the longest river in the world. This desperate act was carried out in the hope that perhaps an Egyptian would, against odds, be aroused to compassion and save the innocent Jewish boy.
Miriam goes to the river. "His sister stood from afar, to know what would happen to him [6]." She gazes at her brother from a distance to see how things would play themselves out. Miriam was a seven-year-old girl at the time. If he is captured by Pharoah's soldiers, she knows she cannot save him; she is also probably too far away to help if the basket capsizes, nor will she be able to do much if an Egyptian takes the baby to his own home. Nor can she nurse the infant if he is crying for milk.
So what does she actually achieve by standing guard (besides finding out what might happen to him)? She achieves one thing. We may see it as a small achievement, but from the biblical perspective, it is grand.
When Pharaoh's daughter discovers baby Moses wailing, she naturally attempts to find a wet nurse to feed him. Moses, although starving, refuses to nurse from an Egyptian woman[9]. That was when Miriam steps in: "Shall I go and call for you a wet nurse from the Hebrew women, so that she shall nurse the child for you?" she asks the Egyptian princess[10]. The princess, Batya, agrees. Miriam calls the mother of the child. Batya gives her the child so that she can nurse him. Moses is curled up again in the bosom of his loving mother. He survives, and the rest is history.
Let's now engage in the "what if" hypothesis. Suppose that Miriam was absent from the scene, what would have occurred? It is likely that after observing that the baby is not taking to any Egyptian women's milk, Batya would have eventually realized, that Moses, whom she knew was a Jewish child (as she states clearly, "he is a child of the Hebrews"), might take better to the milk of a Jewish woman. She would have summoned a Jewish woman and Moses would have received his nourishment. It would have taken longer, Moses would have cried for another hour or two, but eventually, he would have been fed.
So what did Miriam accomplish? Miriam's actions caused Moses' hunger to last for a shorter period of time. Miriam alleviated Moses' hunger pangs sooner, shortening the span of his discomfort.
Miriam caused a young Jewish baby, a "Yiddishen kind," to weep for a few moments less. She alleviated the agony and distress of a baby.
Eighty-one years pass. Miriam is experiencing discomfort. She has a skin disease. The nation is supposed to travel, on route to the Holy Land. (This was before the sin of the spies, and the people were still moving towards the Land of Israel, hoping to fulfill the great dream.) But if they begin traveling now, Miriam's agony would be prolonged, maybe a few hours, maybe a few days, as long as the Hebrews are journeying. On the road, she would not have the opportunity to be quarantined for the requisite seven days.
Because she diminished the discomfort of her brother, eight decades later an entire nation—around three million people, men women, and children—plus the holy Tabernacle, the Ark, Moses, Aron, all of the leaders, and G-d Himself -- all waited. She minimized her brother's pain, and now millions of people waited patiently to minimize her distress.
Because the energy you put out there is the same energy that comes back to you, in one form or another form.
Your Weeping Child
How many times a night do you wake up to your crying infant who yearns to be fed or just held? Mothers often awake every few hours (if they even get that amount of rest) to cradle and nurture their little wailing angels. Some husbands do not even take note; they sleep through the night and then wonder why their wives are exhausted the next day…
It can become stressful to tend continuously to the needs of our little ones. Babies certainly know how to let themselves be heard and we caretakers often become overwhelmed and drained in the process. The serene corridors of office buildings seem so much more serene and interesting.
Yet, as this Miriam episode teaches us, real history is not created in office buildings. It is created in the arms of mothers and fathers nurturing the souls G-d granted them to create our collective tomorrow. On a single day, a little boy was spared, for a short time, hunger pangs. Eight decades later, millions of people and G-d himself, interrupted their journey to pay homage to that individual gesture.
Every child needs a Miriam in his or her life--and all of us can become that Miriam. We meet or hear of children or teenagers who are in pain, starving for nourishment, love, validation, confidence, and meaning. We may say: They will grow up and learn how to manage. Or we may tend to them, be there for them, embrace them, and shorten the span of their agony.
And when we do that, as little Miriam did, millions will be thankful to us for making a difference in that one individual's life.
Godi and Shlomo
It was 1989. An Israeli Defense Force soldier named Godi Remon was shot by an Arab terrorist outside of the town of Ramallah. The Arab gunman assumed he was dead and moved on.
Shortly afterward, a young Israeli named Shlomo Bergman happened to be driving by and saw Godi bleeding on the ground. He brought him into his car and sped off to the nearest Israeli hospital. He underwent surgery and survived. Shlomo

left the hospital minutes before the parents of the victim arrived.
Godi's mother was bothered by not being able to thank the mystery person who saved her son and tried unsuccessfully for a year to find out who he is. But to no avail.
Godi's parents put up a sign at their grocery store which they owned in the city of Ashdod, describing what happened. They reasoned that Israel is a small country and eventually they might find the person who saved their son.
Months passed with no response. Finally, one morning about a year later, Anat Bergman, Shlomo's mother, was visiting friends in Ashdod. She entered a grocery store and noticed the sign hanging by the door of the store. She asked the store owner who put up the sign. When Godi's mother said it was her, the two mothers embraced for a long time.
Then Shlomo's mother said, “Look at me -- you don’t remember me?” “No", Godi's mother said, "I’m sorry. Did we meet before?"
"Yes," Shlomo's mother said. "Twenty years ago I used to live around here and I came all the time to buy basic groceries. One day you noticed that I looked really down and you asked me why I was down. I told you that I was going through a very difficult time and on top of that I was pregnant with my first child and planning on having an abortion because I could not with the mental and financial pressure. As soon as I said “abortion” you called your husband over and the two of you didn’t seem to care about your own store but sat and patiently listened to my story and my challenges. I still remember what you said."
“You told me that it is true that I was going through a hard time, and that you understood how stressed out I was, but sometimes the greatest things in life come through the biggest difficulties. You spoke of the joy of being a mother and that the most beautiful word to hear in the Hebrew language is “Ima” (mother) when spoken by one’s child... You explained how all the challenges pale in comparison with the inner joy coming from raising a child, from embracing your little one, from cultivating a living miracle. You explained how with each child born, a new channel opens up in our lives, generating a greater consciousness, and more livelihood. You both spoke for a while with so much empathy, love, and sensitivity, until I was convinced that I should have this baby."
Shlomo's mother continued, "I gave birth to the baby twenty years ago. My son Shlomo wouldn’t have been alive if not for you. Two decades later, he was the one who saved your son, Godi’s life.”
You see, you saved my son's life; now he saved your son's life.
[1] Numbers 12: 1-16.
[2] Rashi and others say that the Cushite woman was Tziporah, and Cushite, “black,” is a euphemism for “beautiful.” Miriam was criticizing Moshe for abstaining from physical relations with her. Daas Zekanim and Rashbam say that the Cushite was a second wife of Moshe, one that he had married during the forty years he was king of Kush, and she was criticizing him for marrying a Cushite woman, and not a Jewish one. (Ibn Ezra brings both explanations, and settles for Rashi’s explanation.) Alshich suggests that Moses married a black woman, and Miriam felt he abstained because she was black. Miriam protested what seemed like a “racist” act.
[3] Shabbos 97a – the opinion of Rabbi Akiva (Rabbi Yehudah ben Beseira argues with him.)
[4] Numbers 12:13
[5] Sotah 8b and 9b. “With the measure one measures, he too is measured. Joseph the greatest among his brothers, personally took charge of his father Jacob’s burial, and none other than Moses occupied himself with Joseph’s burial. Moses personally took charge of the burial of Joseph, and none other than the Omnipresent occupied Himself with Moses’ burial, as it is said, ‘and He buried him in the valley.’
[6] Exodus 2:4.
[7] Deuteronomy 8:15.
[8] This essay is based on Likkutei Sichos vol. 18 Behaalosecha. To study it inside with Rabbi Jacobson, and for the source sheets from which this essay is taken, please click here.
[9] Rashi Exodus 2:7.
[10] Exodus ibid.
Essay Behaaloscha.

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from: Shlomo Katz <skatz@torah.org>
to: hamaayan@torah.org
date: Jun 9, 2023, 12:40 AM
subject: Hamaayan - “Three Sides of the Menorah”
Volume 37, No. 32 21 Sivan 5783 June 10, 2023
Our Parashah opens with instructions regarding the lighting of the Menorah in the Mishkan / Bet Hamikdash–the third time the Torah mentions this Mitzvah. **R’ Raphael Moshe Luria** z”l (Rosh Yeshiva in several Chassidic yeshivot in Israel; died 2009) explains this repetition:
R’ Moshe ben Maimon z”l (Rambam; 1135-1204; Spain and Egypt) implies that the Bet Hamikdash serves three purposes: (1) it is a place for the Shechinah to rest, as we read (Shmot 25:8), “They shall make a Sanctuary for Me, so I will dwell among them”; (2) it is the place to offer sacrifices; and (3) it is the pilgrimage destination where we go to draw inspiration. (Hil. Bet Ha’bechirah 1:1)
R’ Luria continues: The three times that lighting the Menorah is mentioned in the Torah parallel these three purposes. In Parashat Tetzaveh, lighting the Menorah is mentioned in connection with the command (in the previous Parashah) to build the Mishkan. There is no mention there of what will be

done in the Mishkan, only that Hashem will dwell among us as a result of our efforts.
In Parashat Emor, the Mitzvah to light the Menorah follows the list of festivals. This alludes to a connection between the Menorah and the Bet Hamikdash's role as a pilgrimage destination on the festivals.
Finally, in our Parashah, the Mitzvah to light the Menorah follows the offerings that were brought at the dedication of the Mishkan. This alludes to a connection between lighting the Menorah and the sacrificial offerings. (Bet Genazi)
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"When you go to wage war in your Land against an enemy who oppresses you, you shall sound short blasts of the trumpets, and you shall be recalled before Hashem, your Elokim, and you shall be saved from your foes." (10:9)
R' Aharon Eliezer Paskez z"l (rabbi of Galanta, Hungary; died 1884) writes: A person must fight two wars–one with his external enemies and one with the enemy with him, the Yetzer Ha'ra. And, as Rabbeinu Bachya ibn Pekudah z"l (Spain; early 11th century) writes in Chovot Ha'levavot, the latter of these, the war against the Yetzer Ha'ra, is the harder battle.
R' Paskez continues: We read (Mishlei 16:7), "When Hashem approves of a man's ways, even his foes will make peace with him." This means that if we have external foes, it is an indication that we are not adequately fighting our internal foe, the Yetzer Ha'ra. Thus, says our verse, "When you go to wage war in your Land," be aware that the true battle is "against an enemy who oppresses you," the Yetzer Ha'ra. Therefore, "You shall sound short blasts of the trumpets" so that "you shall be recalled before Hashem, your Elokim," and He will save you "from your foes"–both of them. (Mishmeret Eliezer)
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"The people took to seeking complaints . . ." (11:1)
R' Shlomo Heiman z"l (1892-1945; Rosh Yeshiva in several prominent Lithuanian Yeshivot; finally, Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Torah Vodaath in New York) observes: Bnei Yisrael complained about Hashem's actions and inactions a great deal during their 40 years in the desert–much more than Jews today complain about what Hashem does or does not do. This is a testament to the high degree of Emunah that the Generation of the Desert possessed; their complaining shows that they felt Hashem's presence in their lives and that they knew they had a Father in Heaven to whom they could turn with their complaints. In contrast, our Emunah is much weaker, so we complain less. (Chiddushei R' Shlomo: Imrot Ketzarot p.3)
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"The rabble that was among them cultivated a craving, and Bnei Yisrael also wept once more, and said, 'Who will feed us meat?'" (11:4)
Rashi z"l writes: Did they not have meat? Does not the Torah (Shmot 12:38) record that they left Egypt with flocks and herds?! Do not say that they had already eaten those animals, for we read later, at the end of the 40 years (Bemidbar 32:1), "The children of Reuven had cattle in a very great multitude"! But the truth is that they were only seeking a pretext. [Until here from Rashi. The Torah continues:]
"'We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt Chinam / for free, and the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic." (11:5)
Rashi writes: They could not have meant that the Egyptians gave them fish for nothing, without payment, for the Torah records (Shmot 5:18), "No straw will be given you!" If they did not give them straw, would they have given them fish for nothing? What then is the meaning of 'Chinam'? It means free from–i.e., not burdened with–Heavenly commands. [Until here from Rashi. The Torah relates:]
"Moshe said, 'Six hundred thousand are the people in whose midst I am, yet You say, "I will give them meat, and they will eat for a month!" Can sheep and cattle be slaughtered and suffice for them? If all the fish in the sea are gathered, would it suffice for them?'" (11:21:22)
Surely Moshe did not doubt Hashem's ability to provide meat for any number of people! **R' Yehuda Gruenwald** z"l (1845-1920; rabbi of Szatmar, Hungary) explains: As long as Bnei Yisrael were in the desert, they were not permitted to eat meat whenever they wished; rather, they had to slaughter it and offer it in the Tabernacle as a sacrifice, specifically a Korban Shelamim, from which they then ate. (This Halachah applied only during those 40 years.) When some of Bnei Yisrael complained, "We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt unencumbered by Mitzvot," it was this restriction they were complaining about. They wanted to eat meat without restrictions. This is why their entire complaint is referred to as a pretext–they did not lack meat at all; they only lacked meat that was free of Mitzvot, just as cucumbers and melons, which they mentioned also, are eaten essentially free of Mitzvot.
When Moshe wondered how Hashem could satisfy their demand, he was not doubting Hashem's ability to provide meat. He was saying, "No matter how much meat You give them, even if millions of sheep and cows wander into Bnei Yisrael's camp out of nowhere, You cannot satisfy them because they still will need to bring those animals as Shelamim offerings!" "Can sheep and cattle be slaughtered and suffice for them?" No! Because they can only be slaughtered encumbered by Mitzvot! "If all the fish in the sea are gathered, would it suffice for them?" True, fish do not require Shechitah or being offered as a sacrifice, but, for that very reason, it will not give them what they really want: meat that has had its restrictions lifted!
Hashem responded (verse 23), "Is the hand of Hashem limited?" Certainly, Hashem can give them what they want. And He did, as we read (verse 31), "A wind went forth from Hashem, Va'yagoz (literally, 'and blew') quail from the sea." The word "Va'yagoz" appears only one other time in Tanach–

in Iyov (1:20), where we read "Va'yagoz rosho" / "And he tore [the hair] off his head." This suggests, writes R' Gruenwald, that the quail blew in with their heads already cut, i.e., already slaughtered and ready to eat. Thus, Hashem satisfied Bnei Yisrael's desire. (She'erit Yehuda)

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Shabbat

"When the dew descended upon the camp at night, the Mahn would descend upon it." (Bemidbar 11:9–in our Parashah)

R' Moshe Isserles z"l ("Rema"; 1530-1572; rabbi of Cracow, Poland, and author of the glosses on Shulchan Aruch that adapt that work for Ashkenazim) records that some have a custom on Shabbat evening to eat a filled dish called "Pashtida"–apparently a type of pie or quiche–to recall the Mahn. R' Yisrael Meir Kagan z"l (the Chafetz Chaim; died 1933) writes that such was the custom where he lived, and he explains that just as the Mahn was protected by one layer of dew below it, between it and the ground (see verse quoted above), and a second layer of dew above it (see Shmot 16:12-14), so Pashtida has meat between two layers of dough.

However, the Chafetz Chaim wonders, why is there a custom to recall the Mahn on Shabbat–the one day of the week when Mahn did not fall? Moreover, why is there not a custom to eat Pashtida on Yom Tov, when Mahn also did not fall?

The **Chafetz Chaim** answers, citing the work **Torat Chaim** (R' Avraham Chaim Schor z"l–Poland; 1550-1632): Our sages call Shabbat "Me'ein Olam Ha'ba" / "a little bit of the World-to-Come," and they call the World-to-Come: "A day which is entirely Shabbat." Therefore, we observe several customs on Shabbat that allude to the World-to-Come. For example, we eat fish and meat on Shabbat as an allusion to the "Feasts of Leviathan and Shor Ha'bar" (some type of large ox)–metaphors our Sages use to refer to the reward that awaits Tzaddikim in the World-to-Come. Likewise, we drink wine on Shabbat as an allusion to another such metaphor: "Wine stored in its grapes since the time of Creation." [What these metaphors might mean is beyond the scope of this article.]

For the same reason, we eat foods on Shabbat that remind us of the Mahn, as Mahn is also the food of Olam Ha'ba (see Chagigah 12b). (Mishnah Berurah and Be'ur Halachah 242)

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Insights into Halacha

Weighty Waiting Options

by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

We often find that the Torah's description of even simple actions of our great forefathers impart to us a treasure trove of hanhaga, hashkafa, and even halacha. Sometimes though, it is the exact opposite: a halacha is gleaned from the acts of those far from being paragons of virtue or exemplars of excellence. Indeed, sometimes we learn fascinating halachic insights from people whom we would not consider role models by any stretch of the imagination.

Double Agents

Every Tisha B'Av, and every time we read Parashas Shlach, we are reminded of the grave sin of the Meraglim, the spies whose evil report about Eretz Yisrael still echoes, with repercussions felt until today.[1] Of the twelve spies sent, only two remained loyal to Hashem: Yehoshua bin Nun and Calev ben Yefuneh.[2] The other ten chose to slander Eretz Yisrael instead and consequently suffered immediate and terrible deaths. Due to their vile report, the Jewish People were forced to remain in the desert an additional forty years, and eventually die out before their children ultimately were allowed to enter Eretz Yisrael.

Hashem called this rogues' gallery of spies an "eidah,"[3] literally, "a congregation." The Gemara[4] famously derives from this incident that the minimum requirement for a minyan is a quorum of ten men, since there were ten turncoat "double-agents" who were contemptuously called "a congregation." If ten men can get together to conspire and hatch malevolent schemes, then ten men can assemble to form a congregation for devarim shebekedusha, sanctified matters. This exegesis is duly codified in halacha,[5] and all because of the dastardly deeds of ten misguided men.[6]

Covetous Carnivores

Another prime example of halacha being set by the actions of those less than virtuous,[7] [8] is the tragic chapter of the rabble-rousers who lusted after meat, and disparaged Hashem's gift of the Heavenly bread called manna (munn), chronicled at the end of Parashas Beha'aloscha.[9] The pasuk states that "the meat was still between their teeth" when these sinners met their untimely and dreadful demise.[10] The Gemara extrapolates that since the Torah stressed that there was meat between their teeth, it means to show us that meat between the teeth is still considered tangible meat and requires one to wait before having a dairy meal afterward.[11]

There are actually several different ways to understand the Gemara's intent, chief among them Rashi's and the Rambam's differing opinions:[12]

The Rambam writes that meat tends to get stuck between the teeth and is still considered meat for quite some time afterward.[13]

Rashi however, doesn't seem to be perturbed about actual meat residue stuck in the teeth, but simply explains that since meat is fatty by nature, its taste lingers for a long time after eating.[14]

In any case, regarding the general separation necessary **between meat and milk**, the Gemara itself does not inform us

what the mandated waiting period is. Rather, it gives us several guideposts that the Rishonim use to set the halacha. The Gemara informs us that Mar Ukva's father would not eat dairy items on the same day that he had partaken of meat, but Mar Ukva himself (calling himself "vinegar the son of wine") would only wait "m'seudasa l'seudasa achrina - from one meal until a different meal."[15] [16] The various variant minhagim that Klal Yisrael keep related to waiting after eating meat are actually based on how the Rishonim understood this cryptic comment.

Six Hours

This, the most common custom, was first codified by the Rambam. He writes that meat stuck in the teeth remains "meat" for up to six hours, and mandates waiting that amount. This is the halacha as codified by the Tur and Shulchan Aruch,[17] as well as the vast majority of authorities. The Rashal, Chochmas Adam, and Aruch Hashulchan[18] all write very strongly that one should wait six hours. The mandated six hours seemingly comes from the many places in Rabbinic literature where it mentions that the "meals of a Torah scholar" are six hours apart.[19] Therefore, this fits well with Mar Ukva's statement that he would wait from one meal until the next after eating meat, meaning six hours.

Five Hours and Change

The idea of waiting five hours and a bit, or five and a half hours, is actually based on the choice of words of several Rishonim, including the Rambam and Meiri, when they rule to wait six hours. They write that one should keep "k'mosheish sha'os," approximately six hours.[20] Several contemporary authorities maintain that "six hours" does not have to be an exact six hours - that waiting five and a half or the majority of the sixth hour (or according to some even five hours and one minute) is sufficient, as it is almost six hours.[21] However, it should be noted that not everyone agrees to this, and many maintain that the six hours must be exact.[22]

Four Hours

Waiting four hours is first opined by the Pri Chodosh, who comments that the six hours mandated are not referring to regular "sixty-minute" hours, but rather halachic hours, known colloquially as "sha'os zmanios." This complicated halachic calculation is arrived at by dividing the amount of time between sunrise and sunset into twelve equal parts. Each of these new "hours" are halachic hours and are used to calculate the various zmanim throughout the day. The Pri Chodosh asserts that in the height of winter when days are extremely short, it is possible that six halachic hours can turn into a mere four actual hours![23] Although several authorities rule this way, and others say one may rely on this exclusively in times of great need,[24] nevertheless, his opinion here is rejected out of hand by the vast majority of authorities, who maintain that the halacha follows six true hours.[25] The Yad Efraim points out that if one follows "sha'os zmanios" in the winter, then he must also follow it during the summer, possibly needing to wait up to eight hours!

One Hour

Waiting only one hour between meat and dairy, mainly germane among Jews in and/or from Amsterdam, is codified by the Rema, citing common custom, based on several great Ashkenazic Rishonim, including the Maharil and Maharai (author of the Terumas Hadeshen).[26] The Rema himself, though, concludes that it is nevertheless proper to wait six hours.

Three Hours

Interestingly, and shocking to some, the common German custom of waiting three hours does not seem to have an explicit halachic source.[27] In fact, one who delves into the sefarim of great Rabbanim who served throughout Germany, from Rav Yonason Eibeshutz to Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, will find that they all recommended keeping the full six hours! Yet, there are several theories explaining how such a widespread custom came about:[28]

One, by the Mizmor L'Dovid, is that it is possibly based on the Pri Chodosh's opinion of sha'os zmanios. He posits that if in the middle of winter, three hours is deemed sufficient waiting time, it stands to reason that it should suffice year-round as well.

Another hypothesis, by Rav Binyomin Hamburger, author of Shorshei Minhag Ashkenaz and head of Machon Moreshes Ashkenaz, is that their original custom was to wait only one hour like the basic halacha cited by the Rema, following the majority of Ashkenazic Rishonim. Yet, when the six hours mandated by the Rambam and other Rishonim became more widespread, those in Ashkenaz decided to meet the rest of the world halfway, as a sort of compromise. According to this explanation, it turns out that waiting three hours is intrinsically a chumrah on waiting one hour.

An additional possible theory is that since many in Germany were accustomed to eating five light meals throughout the day, as opposed to the current common three large ones, their interpretation of "m'seudasa l'seudasa achrina" would be waiting the three hours they were accustomed to between their meals.[29]

Bentch and Go

Another opinion, and one not accepted lemaaseh, is that of Tosafos,[30] who posits that "from one meal to another" means exactly that. As soon as one finishes his meat meal, clears off the table and recites Birkas Hamazon, he may start a new dairy meal. Some add that this includes washing out the mouth and cleansing the palate (kinuach and hadacha). This is actually even more stringent than Rabbeinu Tam's opinion, that all one needs is kinuach and hadacha, and then one may eat dairy - even while part of the same meal![31] It is important to realize

that his opinion here is categorically rejected lemaaseh by almost all later authorities.

A Day Away

The most stringent opinion is not to eat meat and milk on the same day (some call this a full twenty-four hours, but it seems a misnomer according to most authorities' understanding). First mentioned by Mar Ukva as his father's personal hanhaga, several great Rabbanim through the ages, including the Arizal, have been known to keep this. Interestingly, this custom is cited by Rav Chaim Palaji[32] as the proper one, and in his opinion, only those who are not able to stick to it can rely upon a "mere" six hours.

Just Sleep on It

Another remarkable, albeit not-widely accepted custom is that of sleeping after eating a meat meal. The proponents of this, including Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv and Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman, Rosh Yeshivas Ner Yisrael, maintain that sleeping causes the food to digest quicker, thereby lessening the required waiting period.[33] It is told that the Chasam Sofer wanted to start relying on this leniency, but upon awakening, every time he tried drinking his coffee (presumably with milk) it would spill. He concluded that this hetter must not have been accepted in Heaven.[34] The majority of contemporary authorities as well do not rely on sleeping as a way of lessening the waiting time.[35] The Steipler Gaon is quoted as remarking that this leniency was the exclusive domain of Rav Elyashiv, as most people sleep six hours a night and he only slept three hours nightly.

Although there are many different and widespread opinions about the proper amount of time one is required to wait after eating meat, and everyone should follow his or her proper family minhag as per the dictum "minhag avoseinu Torah hi,"[36] nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the core requirement of waiting is based on the actions of those with less than perfect intentions. As it states in Pirkei Avos, "Who is wise? One who learns from everyone."[37]

Postscript: Children's Waiting: Although waiting six hours is indeed the most common minhag, nonetheless, most contemporary Poskim are of the opinion that this is not obligatory for children, following the lead of several Rishonim, including the Terumas Hadeshen (Leket Yosher vol. 1, pg. 69 s.v. v'nahag; thanks are due to Rabbi Avromy Kaplan for pointing this out) and the Meiri (Chullin 105a), who briefly mention that children are not mandated to keep the full waiting period.Several authorities, including the Chelkas Yaakov (Shu"t vol. 2:88-89 and vol. 3:147), Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky (Emes L'Yaakov on Tur and Shulchan Aruch, Y.D. 89, footnote 36), and Rav Nissim Karelitz Chut Shani (Shabbos vol. 4, end 343, pg. 309-310), maintain that young children need only wait an hour, and only once they reach nine years old should they start waiting longer. Rav Ovadiah Yosef (Shu"t Yechaveh Daas vol. 3:58) is more lenient, ruling that children only need to start waiting the full amount from a year before their Bar or Bas Mitzvah.

Other Poskim, including the Debreciner Rav (Shu"t Ba'er Moshe vol. 8:36, 5), Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (cited in Piskei Halachos pg. 53:4-5), and Rav Moshe Sternbuch (Shu"t Teshuvos V'Hanhagos vol. 1:434) prefer a staggered approach. Once a child reaches age two-three, he should wait an hour. When he turns five-six, he should wait three hours, and from age nine-ten, he should wait the full six hours.

Others, including the Ponovezh Rosh Yeshiva Rav Elazar Menachem Mann Shach (Michtavim U'Maamarim vol. 4:332), Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (cited in Va'aleihu Lo Yibol vol. 2, pg. 64:3 and Maadanei Shlomo on Dalet Chelkei Shulchan Aruch pg. 241-242), and Rav Shmuel Halevi Wosner (Shu"t Shevet Halevi vol. 4:84 and Kovetz M'Beis Levi vol. 9, pg. 23:9 and vol. Y.D. pg. 36:13, footnote 14) maintain that there is no specific set age, but rather depends on each individual child, his needs, and specific situation. All agree that the child should be educated and trained to gradually wait longer, building up to the full waiting period. See also Shu"t She'aris Yisrael (Y.D. 3), Shu"t Eimek Hateshuva (vol. 6:314), and Shu"t Shulchan Halevi (Ch. 22:10, 3).

Many stress that this leniency for children is only applicable to real food or milk, as they are satiating and nutritional, as opposed to milchig candies and chocolates, etc. which are decidedly not, and for which no dispensation should be given. See Shu"t Yabia Omer (vol. 1, Y.D. 4 and vol. 3, Y.D. 3), Shu"t Maadanei Melachim (83:2), and Chinuch Habanim L'Mitzvos (Tzorchei Kattan 47 and footnote 183).

On the other hand, and contrary to all the above, there is the minority noteworthy opinion of the Steipler Gaon (Orchos Rabbeinu, new edition, vol. 4, pg. 25:2) who held that all minors should still keep the full six hours. His son, Rav Chaim Kanievsky holds this way as well (cited in Moadei HaGra"ch vol. 1:189-190). As with all inyanei halacha, one should ask his personal local halachic authority for guidance as to which opinion he should follow.

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PSHUTO SHEL MIKRA

From the Teachings of Rav Yehuda Copperman zt"l

PARSHAT BEHA'ALOTECHA

The "Megillot" of the Chumash

וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה אֶת הָעָם בֹּכֶה לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָיו

Moshe heard the people weeping in their family groups (Bamidbar 11:10)

In the present chapter we will be discussing of one of the fundamentals of emunah, namely, the Divine origin of the Torah, to which we refer with the terms "Torah min HaShamayim" and "Torah MiSinai." As we have noted numerous times throughout this sefer, it is important to distinguish between these terms, for they refer to two distinct areas of Torah.

"Torah min HaShamayim" refers to the dictation of Torah SheBichtav "from Hashem's mouth to Moshe's ear" (to use the terminology of the Ramban in his Introduction to his peirush on the Torah). As we shall see, not all of this dictation took place at Sinai.

"Torah MiSinai" refers to the transmission of Torah SheBaal Peh, as discussed in the opening Mishnah of Pirkei Avot, "משה קיבל תורה מסיני — Moshe received the Torah at Sinai." Here, the reference is not to the text of the Chumash, but rather to the contents of the Taryag Mitzvot.

An Unusual Weeping — In Pshat and Midrash

In his peirush to our pasuk, Rashi quotes an explanation of Chazal in the Sifrei. The problem in terms of pshuto shel mikra is quite obvious: what is the meaning of the people crying "in their family groups," something which we do not encounter either before or after, in any of the episodes where they complained?

ורבותינו אמרו, "למשפחותיו" — על עסקי משפחות, על העריות הנאסרות להם

Our Rabbis explained (the word) "למשפחותיו — in their families" as a reference to family-related matters, i.e. the arayot relationships that where now forbidden to them.

According to the Sifrei, the people were reacting to the various restrictions imposed on them by the Torah forbidding them to marry certain family members. Regarding this comment of Chazal, Rabbeinu Eliyahu Mizrachi, the foremost among the mefarshei Rashi, raises a very basic question:

I do not understand why they only reacted now, upon journeying from Har Sinai, crying over the Torah's having forbidden them marry these arayot. Many months had passed since the Torah forbade these relationships to them, for from the time Moshe descended the Mountain on the day after Yom Kippur, he did not ascend again, for the whole Torah had already been transmitted to him!

From Hashem to Moshe — and From Moshe to B'nei Yisrael

The question of the Mizrachi is quite straightforward. B'nei Yisrael journeyed from Har Sinai on the twentieth of Iyar in the year after leaving Mitzrayim, over seven months after Yom Kippur when Moshe had already received all the mitzvot. Why, then, did they only react to these prohibitions now? The Mizrachi answers:

Perhaps we may answer, that although the entire Torah had been transmitted to Moshe, it was not (immediately) said in its entirety to Yisrael; rather, each mitzvah in its appropriate time and place.

The Mizrachi is distinguishing between the Torah being transmitted by Hashem to Moshe, and it being transmitted by Moshe to B'nei Yisrael. The very fact that Moshe already had the Torah transmitted to him by a certain time (Yom Kippur) does not necessarily mean that he had likewise transmitted it to Yisrael at that time. That transmission took place over a longer period. This being the case, there is no longer any basis for looking at B'nei Yisrael crying over the arayot forbidden to them as a "delayed reaction." It may well be that the reason B'nei Yisrael only cried at this point over these matters is because they only heard about them now!

The Mizrachi proceeds to adduce proof for his approach from the words of Chazal themselves:

For indeed, in the Gemara Gittin (60a) it is stated that eight parshiyot (sections) of Torah were said on the day the Mishkan was inaugurated: The parsha of Kohanim, of Levi'im, of the sending out of those who are tamei etc. This clearly indicates that although these parshiyot had already been transmitted to Moshe at Sinai, he did not transmit them to Yisrael until Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the day of the inauguration of the Mishkan. If so, perhaps the arayot were similarly not said to them until shortly before they journeyed from Har Sinai.

Concurrence in the Maharal

A similar idea to that of the Mizrachi, distinguishing between the transmission of the Torah to Moshe and its transmission to Yisrael, is stated by the Maharal in his peirush Gur Aryeh, Shemot 21:1.

Commenting on the fact that Parshat Mishpatim begins with the letter vav — "ואלה," Rashi quotes the explanation of Chazal in the Mechilta:

כל מקום שנאמר "ואלה," מוסיף על הראשונים: מה ראשונים מסיני, אף אלו מסיני

Whenever the word "ואלה — and these," is said, it comes to add to that which was previously stated. (The meaning here is) just as the earlier ones (i.e. the Aseret HaDibrot) are from Sinai, so, too, these (the mitzvot of Parshat Mishpatim) are from Sinai.

The question, once again, is obvious. Are not all the mitzvot "from Sinai"? If so, what is so special about the mitzvot in Parshat Mishpatim that we need to be specifically told they were said "from Sinai"? The Gur Aryeh (s.v. kol makom) answers:

The meaning is, in the same way the Aseret HaDibrot were said to B'nei Yisrael at Har Sinai, so, too, the mitzvot of Parshat Mishpatim (were said to B'nei Yisrael at Har Sinai). However, all the other mitzvot were said to Moshe at Sinai, but were not transmitted to Yisrael until the (the period of) Ohel Moed[1] or until (the period when they had reached) the Plains of Moav.[2]

Transcribing the Parshiyot of Torah

We return now to the Mizrachi. As we have seen, based on the words of Chazal, the Mizrachi has stated that Moshe himself received the Torah in its entirety at Sinai. He now proceeds to address himself to another statement in Chazal which seems to imply that even Moshe received the Torah in stages:

The Gemara (Gittin 60a) records a machloket between two Amoraim:

ר' יוחנן אמר תורה מגילה מגילה ניתנה, ור' שמעון בן לקיש אמר תורה חתומה ניתנה

R' Yochanan said … the Torah was given scroll by scroll, while R' Shimon ben Lakish said, the Torah was given as a (finalized) sealed document.

Rashi (peirush to Gittin, ibid.) explains the meaning of each of these views:

Scroll by scroll — when each section was said to Moshe he would write it down, and at the end of the forty years he joined them together and sewed them with sinews.

A (finalized) sealed document — nothing was written until the end of the forty years when all the parshiyot were completed.

What both of these views have in common is that they both indicate that Hashem "said" — i.e. transmitted — the parshiyot of the Torah to Moshe either in installments during the time B'nei Yisrael were in the Midbar, or perhaps only at the end of the forty years there! How is this reconciled with the idea that Moshe received the entire Torah at Sinai? The Mizrachi explains:

This machloket does not relate to the stage when the mitzvot where originally said to Moshe, for they had all been said to him in both their general principle and specific details at Sinai, as is taught in the Torat Kohanim (beginning of Parshat Behar)[3] and cited in the Gemara Zevachim (115b). Rather, the meaning is, when a parsha was said to Moshe to transmit it to B'nei Yisrael, he would write it down. That is, originally Moshe was taught the entire Torah at Sinai, and subsequently Hashem told it to him again to tell B'nei Yisrael, each parsha in its time, at which point he would write it down.

According to the Mizrachi, the point in time which marked the transition of a mitzvah (or group of mitzvot) from being purely Torah SheBaal Peh to being comprised of Torah SheBichtav and Torah SheBaal Peh was the point when

Hashem instructed Moshe to transmit that section to B'nei Yisrael.

Joining the Megillot Together

It is worthwhile pointing out that the process referred to by Rashi as "joining the Megillot together" at the end of the forty years was not merely a technical matter of compiling the Megillot into one sefer. Rather, in some cases, there were additions that needed to be made to the Megillah before it was incorporated into the sefer. Let us mention one such example.

In the end of the parsha dealing with the manna (Shemot 16:35), the pasuk states, "ובני ישראל אכלו את המן ארבעים שנה … עד בואם אל קצה ארץ כנען — B'nei Yisrael ate the manna for forty years … until their arrival at the border of the Land of Canaan." It would not have been possible to write this pasuk in the original Megillah,[4] as the "forty years" being referred to came as a result of the Chet HaMeraglim, and foreknowledge of that Chet on the part of B'nei Yisrael[5] would have conflicted with their free will. Indeed, the Sifrei (Parshat Beha'alotecha) cites this pasuk as an example of the principle that אין מוקדם ומאוחר בתורה — the order in which things are written in the Torah does not necessarily reflect the order in which they occurred. The implications for our discussion are that this pasuk was not part of that Megillah as it was originally written; rather, it was dictated to Moshe when he joined the Megillot together to form the complete Sefer Torah at the end of the forty years.

The same is true regarding the two pesukim in that parsha which describe Hashem telling Moshe to take a flask of manna and place it in the Ohel Moed — the Mishkan (ibid. 33–34). At that stage, the Mishkan did not yet exist, nor had it been commanded to be built. Rather, those pesukim were stated later on once the Mishkan had been built, and added in to the appropriate parsha, as pointed out by Rashi (pasuk 33, s.v. vehanach).[6]

The Chazon Ish

A pertinent discussion concerning the timing of the transmission of mitzvot to B'nei Yisrael and the transcription of the parshiyot of Torah SheBichtav may also be found in the chiddushim of the Chazon Ish (Moed sec. 125), who writes:

It is clear from the words of Chazal that all of taryag mitzvot were transmitted to Moshe during those forty days,[7] and according to R' Akiva (Chagigah 6a) the details of those mitzvot were also transmitted to him, and Rashi explains similarly in the beginning of Parshat Behar ….

Now, Moshe had not yet been commanded to write (the mitzvot) down, nor to transmit them to B'nei Yisrael, with the exception of those mitzvot which he was explicitly commanded to transmit. Nonetheless, according to the opinion that the Torah was given "sealed" (חתומה), there was no command to write anything down.[8]

When the Mishkan was set up, that which was said to him at Sinai was repeated to him in the Ohel Moed, and indeed, there is room to inquire whether all the taryag mitzvot were repeated in the Ohel Moed, or rather only those which he was commanded to transmit to B'nei Yisrael at that time.

In Arvot Moav, the Torah was said to him (Moshe) a third time, and the Shechinah spoke from within his throat, and he was commanded to write (the mitzvot) down using the exact same words with which each parsha was transmitted to him when he was commanded to transmit it to B'nei Yisrael. Thus, there were mitzvot which were written with the words that were said to him at Sinai, and mitzvot which were written with the words that were said in the Ohel Moed, and others in the way they were said at Arvot Moav.

Although the Chazon Ish is discussing the view that the Torah was given "חתומה" — in which case none of the mitzvot were written down until the end of the forty years — nevertheless, he clearly states that the transmission of the mitzvot to B'nei Yisrael was a process which took place over those forty years.

When were the mitzvot "activated"?

Having mentioned the kabbalah (tradition) received from Chazal, that all of the taryag mitzvot were transmitted to Moshe at Sinai, the Chazon Ish proceeds to discuss a number of things which were apparently not transmitted at that time:

Now, there were certain matters, such as the punishment for chillul Shabbat,[9] the punishment for one who blasphemes Hashem's Name[10] and the halachot of precedence regarding inheritance[11] that were not said at Sinai. The reason, as Chazal have explained, is that the righteous people in those episodes were given the merit of being the conduit through which the Halachah became known (מגלגלין זכות על ידי זכאי). Nevertheless, this does not represent a lack in the transmission of the Taryag Mitzvot at Sinai, for these were specific details (of the mitzvot).[12] [13] Additionally,[14] perhaps Moshe did not have permission to rule based on something he had received at Sinai unless he had already been commanded to transmit it to B'nei Yisrael.

With these final words, the Chazon Ish has highlighted yet another difference between the stage when the mitzvot had been transmitted to Moshe Rabbeinu and when they had been transmitted to B'nei Yisrael. No practical ruling could be issued based on Moshe's knowledge of a certain mitzvah until he had been instructed to transmit that mitzvah to B'nei Yisrael. In terms of our discussion we would like to suggest that until Moshe was told the words with which to present the mitzvah to B'nei Yisrael — and with which it would later be written in the Torah — the essence of the mitzvah was not sufficiently expressed in a way that would allow him to issue a halachic ruling regarding it. For the way in which a mitzvah is written in the Torah reveals its nature and essence.

It is indeed fitting that the mitzvah achieves its final formulation in terms of the division between Torah SheBichtav and Torah SheBaal Peh when it is transmitted to B'nei Yisrael, for they are the nation chosen by Hashem to receive and fulfill His Torah.

ישראל, אורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא — חד הוא!

Yisrael, the Torah and Hashem — are one!

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 Qeriah (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 HaMiqdash 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 Levanon. 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, (Hazal 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'aoh?" 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 Omen 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, but which was interrupted by some multitude which was permissive, hedones.

On that day, God will be one and His Name one.

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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-aron...' (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-aron ...' 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 appreicate the location of the two psukim of 'va-yehi bi-nso'a ha-aron', 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-aron...'] 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-aron...' 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-aron') 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 nssiim, are actually referring to the first day of the dedication ceremony when all the nssiim 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 Nsiim (7:1-88) to the psukim which describe Moshe 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 menora 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 Leviyyim 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 Cana'an, 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 Leviyyim 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 Levanon.

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