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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.

Hamas continues to manipulate the media while pretending to negotiate with Israel. Hersh Polin Goldberg, cousin of very close friends of ours and a U.S. citizen, remains a captive. Concerns are increasing that fewer than half of the hostages are still alive. We continue our prayers for the hostages and all our people stuck in Gaza. May our people in Israel wipe out the evil of Hamas, protect us from violence by anti-Semites around the world, and restore peace for our people quickly and successfully – with the continued help of Hashem.

Behaalotecha is a long, complex parsha with numerous episodes and a complete change in mood. The parsha opens with excitement while B'Nai Yisrael complete final preparations to leave the base of Har Sinai and start the final eleven day march to Eretz Yisrael. The sixth aliyah opens with two pasookim in inverted nuns (like brackets) describing how the journey starts and should have gone. Suddenly, without warning, some people start complaining, without any specific reason. Both Hashem and Moshe furiously call this behavior evil. The people complain about eating only manna – Hashem's food – and long for the variety of foods that they ate in Egypt (while slaves!).

Rabbi David Fohrman and his scholars at alephbeta.org explain that the people who try to grind, pound, and bake the manna, hoping to make it into cakes, are rejecting a gift of pure food from heaven, a treasure from Hashem. This behavior parallels the behavior of Adam and Chava Rishon in Gan Eden. God gives them a choice of any food in the garden, except for the fruit from one special tree. Of course, that is the food that the Rishon family wants, and as a result they are no longer able to live in Hashem's special place.

Before leaving the camp, the people are excited to be going to the land that Hashem had promised to their ancestors. After starting the journey and complaining, there is a recurring theme of gathering. The people gather manna and quail. At God's command, Moshe gathers seventy elders to share the burden of playing nursemaid to the people. After Miriam and Aharon complain about Moshe no longer performing the role of husband to Tziporah, the people wait a week and then "gather" Miriam back to the camp. "Asaf," the root of the word to gather, which appears as a leitmotif in the parsha, is the term that the Torah uses for a person who dies. The parsha that opens with hope ends with images of death.

Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander, Rosh Yeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone, focuses on the message of Behaalotecha for us today. God directs Moshe to make a pair of silver trumpets to call the people for important announcements. Each generation must craft its own trumpets. Rabbi Brander explains that the needs of the community change over time. The spiritual needs of B'Nai Yisrael during Yehoshua's leadership are different from what they need during Moshe's generation. These needs change constantly. Today our people need spiritual leadership, including special trumpet sounds, to help us grow as a people and a Divine Nation.

Rabbi Yehoshua Gordon, z"l, focuses on Pesach Sheni, the second chance for those who are tamai and cannot participate in the Korban Pesach with the community and their families. Pesach Sheni is a second chance. The Rebbe reminds us that the theme of Pesach Sheni is that it is never too late to return to Judaism. In the Midbar, Dan, a large tribe (in population) would travel at the rear and act as a lost and found, picking up items that any of the people lose and returning them to the proper owners. Dan represents the message of Pesach Sheni, always give our people a second chance, an opportunity to repent and return to B'Nai Yisrael.

Although Behaalotecha has positive messages for us, it is the beginning of the end of the generation of the Exodus. Behaalotecha ends with Miriam's tzaraat for speaking lashon hora. In Shelach, God punishes the ten Meraglim who commit lashon hora against Eretz Yisrael. Shelach concludes with the mitzvah of tzitzit. Korach ridicules Moshe with the requirement of tzitzit at the corners of our garments and concludes that it is ridiculous to require tzitzit for a garment that is completely blue. The thematic connections among these parashot demonstrate that they are closely connected.

When Miriam ends up with tzaraat, she must stay outside the camp for seven days. The people wait that week until she recovers. Rabbi Yitzchok Magriso, an 18th Century author from Constantinople, studied the dates and locations of the people at the time carefully and discovered that Miriam's tzaraat (chapter 12), the departure of the Meraglim (chapter 13), and Korach's rebellion (chapter 16) all take place during a single week, between 22 and 29 Sivan in the second year after the Exodus. (See Torah Anthology 13: 333-34.) After the Torah reports the law of the Red Heifer (chapter 19), there is a 38 year gap, and the Torah resumes at chapter 20 with the events of the final year.

Behaalotecha, Shelach, and Korach fill out the implications of the complaints of the people that start as soon as B'Nai Yisrael leave the base of Har Sinai for the final journey to Eretz Yisrael. The leitmotif of asaf, gathering, shows that the doom of the generation of the Exodus starts as soon as the people look for reasons to complain. By the end of Korach, this generation's fate of dying in the desert is clear. It will be their children's generation that will finally be worthy of entering and taking over the land that Hashem had promised to our Avot.

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

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah 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 Hersh ben Perel Chana (Hersh Polin, hostage to terrorists in Gaza); Moshe Aaron ben Leah Beilah (badly wounded in battle in Gaza but slowly recovering), Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Reuven ben Basha Chaya Zlata Lana, Yoram Ben Shoshana, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Chai Frumel bat Leah, Rena bat Ilsa, Riva Golda bat Leah, Sarah Feige bat Chaya, Sharon bat Sarah, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, and all our fellow Jews in danger in and near Israel. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom

Hannah & Alan

Parshat Behaalotcha: Burying Moshe's Trumpets & Crafting our Own

By Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander * © 5784 (2024)
President and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone **

Dedicated in memory of Israel's murdered and fallen, the refuah shlayma of the wounded, the return of those being held hostage in Gaza, and the safety of our brave IDF soldiers.

When a group of people is held together through shared identity, common goals, norms and mores, they demonstrate community by physically assembling in their moments of triumph and trouble, sorrow and joy.

In Parshat Beha'alotcha, God instructs Moshe to craft the Chatzotzrot, the two silver trumpets, which would be sounded at important moments. During the journey of the Jewish people through the wilderness, the trumpets began to play an important role, indicating when they would halt and when they would carry on traveling. Yet the Torah already in our parsha dictates the significant role the trumpets would ultimately play in the future — gathering the people in times of war and at moments of celebration. Thus, the stated view of the Rambam *(Sefer Hamitzvot,* Positive Commandments, #59) is that the fashioning and use of the Chatzotzrot were not limited to the forty years in the desert, but rather constitute an eternal positive mitzva, applicable in all generations.

In light of the timelessness of the trumpets, like all the other vessels used first in the Mishkan and when appropriate then used in the Beit HaMikdash, it is striking that the Talmud (Menachot 28a-b) states that Moshe was commanded not to pass on the trumpets to the next generation. Rather, he was instructed to ensure that Yehoshua and the generations that followed would craft their own. Each generation was to make their own trumpets. Carefully noting that the phrase "aseh lecha," 'make for yourself [two silver trumpets]' appears twice by the trumpets, the Talmud derives that Moshe was instructed to make them only 'for himself' – for his generation and not for those that would follow. The midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 15:15) goes so far as to state that the trumpets were placed in genizah, suggesting perhaps that they were buried.

If the trumpets are meant to be used in every generation, why can't Moshe hand off the ones he designed himself – just as he did for all the other vessels in the Tabernacle and eventually for use in the Temple? Why is it important that each generation fashion their own trumpets to gather the community together in times of joy and tribulation?

So much of what the Mishkan and its vessels represent – God's presence, the Torah, and the covenant — are constants. The connection between God and the Jewish people is unwavering and eternal. There is no need, during the hand off from Moshe to Yehoshua, to fashion a new Ark, or menorah (candelabra), or a new altar. Our worship, our fealty to the mitzvot stay the same from one generation to the next.

But the needs of our community are always in flux. Our interaction with one another shifts as we adapt to new circumstances and as we encounter different realities in times of war and of peace; in times of challenge and times of celebration. And although our connection with God is constant, its nature fluctuates as well depending on each generation's circumstances and experiences. It is for this reason that the unity of God is not in conflict with the recognition that God is known by many names – based on circumstances God is perceived and reckoned with differently.

These changes are constantly making new demands for us to maintain communal cohesion and renewed and refreshed rendezvous with God as a community. The music, the tone of our engagement with others and with God changes. What holds us and our relationship with God together most certainly changes from one time and place to another. Furthermore, we mortal beings who form a community with one another are consistently outlived by the very community, "the community never perishes" (T'mura 15b). The community is always repopulated by the next generation, individuals who

are often attracted to a different type of meaning and religious experience. Each generation seeks spiritual melodies with different cadences than those of the past.

This is why the trumpets, which represent our ingathering, our points of reflection in times of joy and challenge, can't be reused. Rather, we need to fashion them again and again, in each and every generation, to ensure that the spiritual music being produced is responding to the call of the hour in facing the current needs of our people and our evolving relationship with God.

In a moment when the Jewish people face new opportunities and emerging challenges, we cannot rely on the ballads of the past to know what will bring us together and engage us. We need the sounds of modern trumpets. What was once the status quo can't be presumed to be what is best for our communal cohesion under new circumstances. Moshe's trumpets played the music that enabled his generation to come together, at a time when we were seeking freedom from slavery, transforming from nomadic tribes to a nation with a destiny. We need trumpets that produce music based on the challenges and joys we face in a modern context. These include maintaining optimism and courage in a prolonged war with tragic mounting casualties, hostages still in captivity and citizens displaced from their homes. We live in a world in which antisemitism makes it difficult to walk on global college campuses; yet at the same time, we have a world in which real leadership is found within our youth on the battlefield and home front, and the State of Israel continues to flourish. We need trumpets that produce sounds that will enable us to elicit Divine connection and communal cohesion now, in the world we live in.

Perhaps the question that we must ask ourselves is what spiritual symbols, chords, pitches and rhythms must we produce to enable our growth as a people and a Divine nation?

* Ohr Torah Stone is a modern Orthodox group of 32 institutions and programs. Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin is the Founding Director, and Rabbi Dr. Brander is President and Rosh HaYeshiva. For more information or to support Ohr Torah Stone, contact ohrtorahstone@otsyny.org or 212-935-8672. Donations to 49 West 45th Street #701, New York, NY 10036.

** Ian and Bernice Charif of Sydney, Australia dedicate Devrei Torah from Ohr Torah Stone this week in loving memory of Bryna (Bertha) Charif, z"l, whose yartzeit is 21 Sivan.

Behaalotecha – The Rosh Yeshiva Responds – Making Sushi on Shabbat

by Rabbi Dov Linzer
President and Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah

> *We remember the fish, which we ate in Egypt for free; the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic* (Bamidbar 11:5).

QUESTION

May one roll sushi on Shabbat? May one chop vegetables for sushi?

ANSWER

Why should chopping vegetables be a problem? Tochein? It's fine if you plan to eat it right away—see Shulchan Arukh OC 321:12

Regarding the roll, I have to tell you that in the past I had doubts that it might be forbidden. Some people feel strongly that it is no different than a sandwich or making any concoction without cooking in the kitchen, but I wondered if it is a type of boneh (which exists by food, see making cheese) — putting together disparate pieces to make a whole, and this is actually a new creation much more than a sandwich or salad (IMHO), all held together tightly.

HOWEVER — I reversed myself. The Gemara says that אין בנין בכלים and that should definitely apply to food. Now, אין בנין בכלים does not mean that it is not a problem to make a keli from scratch, just that it is not boneh to put the pieces back together. As Ramban says — there isn't boneh bekeilim, but there is boneh keli. So — the only time the Gemara applies boneh to food is cheese — making it from scratch, like making a keli from scratch. But just as it is not boneh to put the

pieces of the keli together, it is not boneh to put the pieces of the sushi together. This is the overwhelming consensus, but Kitzur Shulchan Arukh 80:25, says the strict approach that I had initially considered, [. . . unfortunately the end of Rabbi Linzer's message was missing]

* President and Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, Bronx, NY.

https://library.yctorah.org/2024/06/ryrbehaalotecha/

Lonely at the Top

By Dr. Michelle Friedman, MD *

Chapter 11 of Parsahat Behaalotecha shocks the reader with a description of the nadir of Moshe Rabbenu's life. Trouble starts with his flock, the newly freed former slaves grumbling right after their miraculous nighttime exodus. The peoples' dissatisfaction worsens with a litany of nostalgic reminiscences about delicacies they enjoyed in Egypt and is followed by a pathetic barrage of complaints about the manna. The sound of B'nai Yisroel weeping over food pushes Moshe to the absolute low point of his life, and he cries out to God:

Why have You done evil to your servant, and why have I not found favor in your eyes, to put the burden of all this people upon me? Did I conceive all this people, did I give birth to them, that You should say to me, 'Bear them in your lap, as the guardian bears the infant,' to the land that you swore to their fathers? From where shall I get meat to give to all this people when they weep to me, saying, 'Give us meat that we may eat'? I alone cannot bear this people, for they are too heavy for me. And if thus You would do with me, kill me, pray, altogether, if I have found favor in Your eyes, and let me not see my evil fate." (Numbers 11:11-15, Robert Alter translation)

What?! Moshe Rabbenu, the greatest of our prophets, the man so close to God that he asks to see God's face, negates that special relationship with the Divine and demands a kind of assisted suicide? And to make matters more confusing, why is he framing his despair in the language of conception, birth and infant care?

Moshe is at his breaking point. Overwhelmed by the mantle of leadership usually conferred to men, Moshe reverts to the most basic of nurturant, woman-oriented relationships — carrying a child in utero, giving birth and breastfeeding. In imploring God with his own inability to carry out these classically female roles, Moshe underscores the unique circumstances of his own birth and infancy — how Shifra and Pua, the righteous midwives, protected women in labor, how his own mother Yocheved, hid him in a floating cradle and how his sister Miriam collaborated with Pharoah's daughter to rescue him from the Nile and sustain him. Moshe is alone and bereft, distant from his earlier female saviors, estranged from his biological father, mortal enemies with the Pharoah/father of his adoptive family and most recently, abandoned by Yitro, the surrogate father whom he loves so deeply. Moshe is grieving the loss of the man he loves most in the world. Only a few verses earlier, in Numbers 10:29-31, Moshe and his father-in-law of many names — Yitro/Horeb/Reul — part company. Moshe pleads with Yitro to stay with him and help guide the fledgling nation but Yitro seems firm in his determination to return home. In desperation Moshe asks God to do the opposite of what all those life affirming women did years ago; put him out of his misery and kill him.

God's reply, that Moshe should gather a council of elders, responds to the depths of Moshe's loneliness. God understands that Moshe is suffering something much deeper than escalating annoyance and frustration with the incessant whining of the freshly liberated children of Israel. God's consolation draws on Moshe's earlier relationship with his father-in-law Yitro. God knows that upon Yitro's observation early on in the journey out of Egypt that Moshe was drowning in administrative duties. Yitro gave Moshe sage management advice to set up a judicial system. God understands that humans need support and companionship and that sometimes it can be so lonely at the top that even a tzaddik like Moshe wants out. God understands that loneliness can be a killer.

Graced by God's non-judgmental compassion and the practical support of seventy elders who will help shoulder his burdens, Moshe is fortified to go on and withstand immediate challenges — Eldad and Medad prophesizing among the people, Miriam's bout with illness — Moshe will sustain many other assaults but his spirit never sinks again to the depth he reveals in this week's parsha.

Loneliness doesn't end in BaMidbar, the Book of Numbers. In fact, probably more people today suffer in silent, overburdened isolation than ever. The erosion of community and social bonds has been ascribed to multiple factors — dependence on technology, personal mobility leading to family dispersion and so much more. But reaching out, connecting and caring is as important today as it was during Moshe's crisis in Behaalotecha . May we all be blessed with the wisdom and generosity of heart to do so.

* Director of Pastoral Counseling at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School .

https://library.yctorah.org/2024/06/Behaalotecha5784/

The Menorah as Symbol: Thoughts for Parashat Beha'aloteha

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

This week's Torah reading begins with the dramatic account of Aaron lighting the Menorah of the Mishkan. The Menorah was to be a feature of the spiritual life of Israel in its formative years, during the days of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem, and for generations thereafter.

While the Torah goes into considerable detail about the construction and lighting of the Menorah, it doesn't explain its purpose. The ark held the sacred Tablets of the Law. The altar was used for offerings. The various vessels each had a practical function. But what was the purpose of the Menorah? The Mishkan and Temples didn't particularly need a seven-pronged candelabrum for lighting.

The Menorah, it seems, was important for its aesthetic and symbolic value. Its seven lamps have been interpreted as alluding to the traditional seven branches of wisdom. They have also been described as calling to mind the seven days of creation, with the central lamp symbolizing the Sabbath.

The Menorah was a beautiful object that drew the attention of the public. When people saw it, they felt sanctity; they internalized the spiritual light that emanated from it. In some way, the Menorah was identified with wisdom. The Talmud (Bava Batra 12a) cites the opinion of Rabbi Isaac who taught: *"One who desires to become wise should incline to the south [when praying]…[since] the Menorah was on the southern side of [the Temple]."*

In 1949, the newly established State of Israel adopted the Menorah flanked by olive branches as its national symbol. The Menorah not only recalled a powerful ancient symbol of Israel, but alluded to its role for all humanity. The prophet Isaiah (60:3) foresaw the day when *"nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn."* The prophet Zecharia had a vision of a gold Menorah (4:3): *"And there were two olive branches by it, one upon the right of the bowl, and the other upon the left side of it."* So the symbol of the State of Israel was a proud expression of Jewish history, tradition and prophetic vision. It reflected the hope that Israel would be a source of light for all nations. The olive branches were symbolic of Israel's eternal desire for peace.

But there is also something deeper to be considered.

Jewish autonomy in the land of Israel came to an end with the Roman destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. Thousands of Jews were murdered; thousands sold into slavery; thousands went into exile. The remaining Jews suffered under the heavy hand of Roman rule.

The Romans celebrated their defeat of Israel by erecting the Arch of Titus in Rome. The interior wall of the arch includes a vivid depiction of Romans carrying off treasures from Jerusalem…most notably the Menorah. For the past many centuries, every visitor to the Arch of Titus could see the Romans gloating over the plundered Menorah.

But little could Titus have imagined that the defeated Jews would one day regain sovereignty over their historic homeland. It took nearly 1900 years to happen…but it happened!

The Arch of Titus depicts the Menorah as it was taken from a defeated and humiliated Jewish People. Now, the founders of the modern State of Israel reclaimed the image of the Menorah as the State's national symbol. The long exile has come to an end. The Jewish People have reclaimed their historic land…and in a profound way have reclaimed the Menorah that Rome had stolen so long ago.

Throughout history, the Menorah has been a source of spiritual, intellectual and emotional strength for the Jewish People. In our times, with the establishment of the State of Israel, the Menorah reminds us of the power of faith, persistence, and courage. Its light should never be taken for granted.

Am Yisrael Hai. Od Avinu Hai.

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

The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has experienced a significant drop in donations during and since 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 during its current fund raising period. Thank you.

https://www.jewishideas.org/article/menorah-symbol-thoughts-parashat-behaaloteha

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A Woman of Valor: Thoughts for Parashat Beha'aloteha

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

Aaron the High Priest was commanded to light the menorah. The Torah describes his action with the word "beha'aloteha," when you raise the lights. Rashi comments that Aaron was supposed to kindle the lights so they would rise on their own. Symbolically, this image applies to the role of parents and teachers: they are supposed to educate and inspire the young so that the children/students are able to rise on their own. The goal is to fashion responsible human beings who can act properly on their own.

This week, our family marks the anniversary of the passing of our mother, Rachel Romey Angel, who died in 1983 on the Hebrew date of Sivan 17. She was a magnificent mother, teacher, and human being. Below is an essay I wrote, included in my book The Wisdom of Solomon and Us, Jewish Lights, 2016, pp. 135-138.

My mother, Rachel Romey Angel, was born in 1914 in Seattle, Washington, the second of seven children born to Marco and Sultana Romey — both immigrants from Turkey. Although my grandparents were born and raised in Turkey, their first language was Judeo-Spanish, the language of the Sephardic Jews scattered throughout the former Ottoman Empire. My mother did not learn to speak English until she attended kindergarten in public school.

The Sephardic immigrants of Seattle came to America with little money and little formal education, but with a tremendous desire to make a new and better life for themselves and their families. The first generation immigrants worked at various trades; their children went on to own stores and other businesses; their grandchildren were nearly all university educated professionals and business people.

My mother was "only a girl." In those days and in that society, it was assumed that girls would marry at an early age and have families of their own. Girls did not need much education, only basic domestic skills such as cooking and sewing. In the milieu of my mother's childhood, it was highly unusual for a woman to attend university or to hold a serious job outside the home.

My mother was a brilliant student, but when she turned 16 — the legal age that one was required to attend school—my grandfather told her she had to quit school and get a job to help support the family. Her older sister had done that and was

working in a candy factory, and my grandfather wanted my mother to do likewise. My mother told her teachers at Garfield High School that she was going to be leaving school to go to work. One of the teachers was so distressed by this news that she spoke with my grandfather, urging him to let my mother graduate from high school. She told him that his daughter was a wonderful student with an excellent mind; if given the opportunity, she could attend university and do great things with her life. My grandfather replied: “she’s only a girl; she doesn’t need more education; she has to go to work and earn money.”

Thus ended my mother’s academic career. She never graduated from high school. She worked in the candy factory for a few years, got married at age 21, and went on to have four children, and eventually twelve grandchildren. She was a voracious reader, a deep thinker, and a keen observer of human nature. Neither her husband nor their close group of friends had a college graduate among them, so my mother was sort of a closet intellectual. She functioned happily and successfully in her world, but she kept her intellectual, philosophical side pretty much to herself. If she had been born two generations later, she would have been a university graduate, probably a Ph.D., and she would have had opportunities in academia, public life or business that were totally out of reach for her in her time and place.

Was my mother a success? Was she happy? Did she fulfill her mission in life? The answer to these questions depends on how we evaluate success, happiness and fulfillment in life. If we deem someone successful, happy and fulfilled if she earned a good income, lived a prosperous life, earned an academic degree, and held responsible positions in professional life — then my mother did not meet these requirements.
But my mother was a remarkable woman. She was a loyal daughter, devoted wife, loving mother and grandmother, gracious hostess, excellent friend. She was a profound thinker, an avid reader, a talented knitter. She enjoyed the simple pleasures of life. She was good and kind, thoughtful, and highly principled. If measured by standards of quality rather than quantity, my mother was eminently successful, happy and fulfilled in life.

When King Solomon praises the “woman of valor,” he refers to the virtues of being a good wife and mother, a hard-worker on behalf of her family, a generous soul who is charitable and kind. The Hebrew word for valor, hayyil, has the connotation of strength and courage. The “ideal” woman is not identified as being passive and obedient, but rather as having a strong character focused on her life’s values and goals.

When reading the last passages of Mishlei today, one is struck by how much society has changed in recent generations. Women today have far more opportunities in education, professions, public life and business than had been true for women in many societies of the past. But this success has also come with trade-offs. In pursuing careers, women may defer or forego the joys of a solid marriage, child-rearing, and being full-time mothers. Are the modern “liberated” women more successful, happier, and more fulfilled than the women of my mother’s pattern of life? In some ways, yes; in other ways, probably not.

I remember reading somewhere that in our modern society a woman is considered creative if she produces a piece of sculpture or operates her own business. But if a woman is “merely” a mother who creates children, shapes their lives, and sees to it that they can lead happy and good lives, she is labeled somewhat pejoratively as “only being a housewife.” A full-time wife and mother is deemed to be on a lower level than women who devote their energies to professional or business life.

If my mother had been given more opportunities to develop her intellect and talents, she would have had a significant impact on many people beyond her immediate circle of family and friends. She would have been gratified to learn more and teach more, and to play a greater role in the larger society. She would have been very happy to have many of the opportunities which were available to her own daughter, daughters-in-law and granddaughters.

But having said that, her own life evaluated in its own context was a remarkably happy, meaningful and successful adventure. She was grateful for what she had and what she was able to achieve. She was beautiful and graceful; she feared the Lord; she loved and was loved; she raised and inspired her children; she left an indelible impact on her grandchildren. “She shall be praised.”

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

https://www.jewishideas.org/woman-valor-thoughts-parashat-behaaloteha

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B'Haaloscha: Are You For Real?

By Rabbi Mordechai Rhine *

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos!

* Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of more than 20 years. Based in Maryland, he provides services internationally via Zoom. He is the Director of TEACH613: Building Torah Communities, One family at a Time, and the founder of CARE Mediation, focused on Marriage/ Shalom Bayis and personal coaching. To reach Rabbi Rhine, his websites are www.care-mediation.com and www.teach613.org; his email is RMRhine@gmail.com. **For information or to join any Torah613 classes, contact Rabbi Rhine.**

B'ha'aloscha - It's All In Your Mind... Or Is It?

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer *

Perhaps the most central concept in Torah philosophy is also the most complex – the concept of free will. The first of the Ramba”m’s thirteen principles of faith is that G-d is the Creator of all and He alone is the one who did, does and will do anything that has happened, is happening or will happen in the world. Yet we are told that G-d somehow created a possibility within that reality for every human being to control their own destiny. We are able to make our own decisions and those decisions make a difference. G-d controls the world, but He does so in accordance with our choices.

As we ponder this conundrum, there are many thoughts and questions we can and should ask. I would like to focus on one question specifically this week. Just how much control does G-d give us – how much impact do our choices and decisions actually have?

The Torah tells us of great errors that occurred as we left Har Sinai and began to travel to the land of Israel. The second of these is described as a group within the camp “desired a desire,” after which the Jewish people also cried, asked for

meat and complained about their lack of food in the desert. (Bamidbar 11:4-6) The Ramba"n explains that the term "desired a desire" is meant quite literally. The nation in the desert did not experience any lack. They had nothing they could ask for and nothing to desire. As the Torah describes, the mann they ate in the desert could be prepared in many ways and had a wondrous taste. (ibid. 8) Nonetheless, this group wanted to desire something. In the words of the Ramba"n "they forced upon themselves an abundant desire as if they desired to eat coals and dirt and spoiled food." Instead of appreciating G-d's boundless blessing, they chose to feel a sense of desire and passion.

When G-d gave us the capacity to choose, He even gave us the capacity to create choices where there are none. We have the ability to focus not only our thoughts but even our emotions and in so doing create desires and passions where none would ever exist. We can create an abundant passion for coal, dirt and spoiled food. Yet, it goes even further.

The Torah describes how the nation joined with this group and complained about the "lack" of food saying, "Our soul is dried out" (ibid 6). The Ramba"n explains based on the Onkelos that they experienced such an intense yearning for other foods that their bodies heated up and they were literally feeling dried out. This was despite the fact that the mann was "like the moisture of oil" (ibid 8), which the Ramba"n tells us means that the mann naturally satiated and moisturized all who ate it. When they chose to create a passion, it wasn't just in their mind. The passion and desire became real and had a physical effect on them, literally drying out their bodies from the heat of their desire, even as they ate a naturally moisturizing food. Our choices are not only in our own minds. G-d has given us extensive control over our own realities.

Our Rabbis teach us that G-d's goodness is hundreds of times more powerful than His harshness. (See Rash"i on Shemos 20:6) Anytime G-d grants us the capacity to create difficulty for ourselves, He grants us an equal or greater capacity to help ourselves. If choosing passion over appreciation has such a powerful impact on our psyche, then choosing appreciation over passion would have an equal and opposite impact. If focusing inappropriately can create a desire for spoiled foods, then focusing our attention and appreciation on the good things in our lives can even weaken our passions for truly enjoyable foods. Our choice can change our reality.

Life is full of internal choices where to focus our attention and how to react or respond. When G-d gave us free will, he gave us far more than the ability to choose. He enabled us – through our choices to impact our psyche and even change our view of reality – for better or for worse. The choice is truly ours.

* Savannah Kollel; Congregation B'nai Brith Jacob, Savannah, GA. Until recently, Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD. Rabbi Singer will become Rosh Kollel next year.

Behaalotecha

by Rabbi Herzl Hefter *****

]Rabbi Hefter did not send in a Dvar Torah for Behaalotecha. Watch this space for his future Devrei Torah[

* 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.

Behaalotecha: Parsha Pointers, Parsha Food for Thought

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia *

1. What is the meaning of lighting the candles אל מול פני המנורה?)Numbers 8:2-3(

2. Why do the Levites have to shave their whole bodies, and why do they they do it with a razor?)8:7(

3. How can the Israelites put their hands on the Levites, and what is the meaning of 8:10-11(והניף אהרן?)

4. The Levites were told to place their hands on the bulls which were sacrificed. There were two bulls and thousands of Levites, so how was that done?)8:12(

5. In 8:25 is says that the Levites worked in the Mishkan from the age of 25, but previously)4:3(we read that they started serving at 30. How can we explain the contradiction?

6. Why is the description of the travels dictated by the position of the pillar of cloud so verbose and redundant?)9:15-23(. Note that the terms לפי/על פי appear 8 times in that paragraph. Could it be related to 11:19-20?

7. Who is חובב? Did he stay with the Israelites or did he leave them?)10:29-32(

8. They traveled from the Mount of HaShem. Did this happen right after Matan Torah?)10:33(

9. What is the meaning of the inverted Nunim which frame verses 10:35-36?

10. What are the Israelites complaining about in 11:1?

11. Who are the אספסוף? Note that the verb אסף and its variants appears also in 11:16; 11:22; 11:24; 11:25; 11:30; 11:32; 12:14-15.

12. According to 11:4-5, did the Israelites eat meat in Egypt?

13. Compare 11:18 with the preparation for Matan Torah.

Devrei Torah from Rabbi Ovadia this year come from an unpublished draft of his forthcoming book on Tanach, which Rabbi Ovadia has generously shared with our readers. Rabbi Ovadia reserves all copyright rights to this material.

Chalav and the Power of Permission

By Rabbi Moshe Rube *

Limmud may be the only place where we can discuss psychedelics, Jewish comedic history, and biblical interpretation all in one place and all in one afternoon.

Last weekend I had the privilege of attending Limmud in Wellington after a beautiful Shabbat at the Wellington Jewish community center. With over 200 people in attendance, we all explored a cornucopia of Jewish presentations.)Perhaps we can call it a cornucopia Torah utopia.(

Now of course each topic probably deserved its own conference. But for that Sunday it was enough to explore the variety of thoughts, attitudes and studies presented at one inclusive learning conference. Just the knowledge that there is so much more to learn out there, just waiting for us to discover it, should give us all goosebumps.

Our portion though details when a desire for variety goes wrong. The Jews had been fed manna from heaven but rudely demanded that God give them meat and even stated the ridiculous proposition that they were so much better off in Egypt. Slavery plus meat beat freedom without meat in their mind. They received their punishment at the end, but we do see

here the strong desire to have a variety of experience as part of our diets both food and learning-wise. In addition to a variety of foods, meeting and learning from a variety of people also gives our life a kick of nutrition.

Although not all of us had a chance to go to Limmud, did not more of us experience this variety over Tikkun Leil? Believe it or not, our community in Auckland contains a stunning variety of people to learn from. We don't need to wait for next Limmud to learn from a variety. Let's just keep talking and learning with and from our fellow members.

* Senior Rabbi of Auckland Hebrew Congregation, Remuera)Auckland(, New Zealand. Formerly Rabbi, Congregation Knesseth Israel)Birmingham, AL(.

Rav Kook Torah
Beha'alotecha: Praying 'Against God'

Defending the People

The newly-freed slaves found it difficult to adjust to the harsh realities of life in the wilderness:

> *"The people began to complain.... When God heard, He displayed His anger; God's fire flared out, consuming the edge of the camp"*)Num. 11:1(.

The people cried out to Moses for help, and Moses defended them before God: *"Moses prayed to God, and the fire died down."*

The Torah does not record Moses' prayers. But the Sages wrote that Moses spoke out forcefully in defense of the people. In fact, the Talmud suggests that Moses' prayers were valiant, even bold. Moses didn't pray to God — he prayed, as it were, "against God")Berachot 32a(.

Praying Against God?

Rav Kook noted that the Torah rarely uses the expression "to pray to God." Often, the Torah simply states that a person "prayed." It is understood that prayer is directed towards God.

Yet there is an additional reason why the phrase "to pray to God" is surprising. The Hebrew verb לְהִתְפַּלֵּל)"to pray"(is in the reflexive tense. This grammatical form emphasizes the emotional impact of prayer back on the soul. The introspective nature of prayer brings out an outpouring of enlightened emotion within the soul.

It is fitting to speak of praying lifnei Hashem — a prayer which is "before God" or "facing God." This phrase indicates that we have directed our heart and mind to contemplate God in prayer. As the Sages taught: *"Be aware before Whom you are standing in prayer."*

However, it is unrealistic to speak about praying "to God." The clarity of enlightenment attainable by intellectual inquiry and contemplation goes far beyond the emotional inspiration experienced in prayer. To "pray to God" would indicate that one attained a heightened awareness of the Creator, and through concentrated prayer was somehow able to achieve an emotional uplifting of the soul at this lofty cognitive level.

Moses' Remarkable Prayer

Therefore the Sages emphasized the tremendous struggle in Moses' extraordinary prayer. It was as if he had prayed "against God." Moses defied the natural limitations of prayer. This explanation is reinforced by a literal reading of the

Midrash, which says that Moses hurled words towards Heaven. This projects the imagery of a person who forcefully heaves an object upwards, fighting against the laws of gravity, as he throws an object higher than he can reach.

What enabled Moses to attain such a remarkable level of prayer? His lofty soul flowed with such passionate yearning to perfection that his prayer was able to surpass his intellectual grasp of God's providence of the universe. This unusual phenomenon sometimes occurs with spiritual giants — a testimony to the purity of their inner longings for good and perfection.

)Adapted from *Ein Eyah* vol. I, p. 140.(

https://www.ravkooktorah.org/BEHAALOT60.htm

Beha'alotecha: The Duality of Camp and Congregation)5779(

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

The parsha of Beha'alotecha speaks about the silver trumpets – clarions – Moses was commanded to make:

> *The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Make two trumpets of silver; make them of hammered work. They shall serve you to summon the congregation]edah[and cause the camps]machanot[to journey."* Num. 10:1–2

This apparently simple passage became a springboard for one of the most profound meditations of the late Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik. It appears in his great essay *Kol Dodi Dofek,* on the Jewish approach to suffering.]1[

There are, says Rabbi Soloveitchik, two ways in which people become a group – a community, society, or nation. The first is when they face a common enemy. They band together for mutual protection. Like all animals who come together in herds or flocks to defend themselves against predators, we do this for our survival. Such a group is a machaneh – a camp, a defensive formation.

There is another, quite different, form of association. People can come together because they share a vision, an aspiration, a set of ideals. This is the meaning of edah, congregation. Edah is related to the word ed, witness. Edot)as opposed to chukim and mishpatim(are the commands that testify to Jewish belief – as Shabbat testifies to creation, Passover to the Divine involvement in history, and so on. An edah is not a defensive formation but a creative one. People join together to do what none could achieve alone. A true congregation is a society built around a shared project, a vision of the common good, an edah.

Rabbi Soloveitchik says these are not just two types of group, but in the most profound sense, two different ways of existing and relating to the world. A camp is brought into being by what happens to it from the outside. A congregation comes into existence by internal decision. The former is reactive, the latter proactive. The first is a response to what has happened to the group in the past. The second represents what the group seeks to achieve in the future. Whereas camps exist even in the animal kingdom, congregations are uniquely human. They flow from the human ability to think, speak, communicate, envision a society different from any that has existed in the past, and to collaborate to bring it about.

Jews are a people in both of these two quite different ways. Our ancestors became a machaneh in Egypt, forged together by a crucible of slavery and suffering. They were different. They were not Egyptians. They were Hebrews – a word which probably means "on the other side," "an outsider." Ever since, Jews have known that we are thrown together by circumstance. We share a history all too often written in tears. Rabbi Soloveitchik calls this the covenant of fate)brit goral(.

This is not a purely negative phenomenon. It gives rise to a powerful sense that we are part of a single story – that what we have in common is stronger than the things that separate us:

> Our fate does not distinguish between rich and poor…]or[between the pietist and the assimilationist. Even though we speak a plethora of languages, even though we are inhabitants of different lands…we still share the same fate. If the Jew in the hovel is beaten, then the security of the Jew in the palace is endangered. *"Do not think that you, of all the Jews, will escape with your life by being in the king's palace"*)Esther. 4:13(.]ed.: Mordechai's words calling Esther to go to the King to save the Jews.[Rosenberg, *Theological and Halachic Reflections on the Holocaust,* p. 84.

Our shared community's fate leads also to a sense of shared suffering. When we pray for the recovery of a sick person, we do so "among all the sick of Israel." When we comfort a mourner, we do so "among all the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem." We weep together. We celebrate together. This in turn leads to shared responsibility: "All Israel are sureties for one another."]2[And this leads to collective action in the field of welfare, charity, and deeds of loving kindness. As Maimonides puts it:

> *All Israelites …are like brothers, as it is said, "You are children of the Lord your God"*)Deut. 14:1(. *If brother shows no compassion to brother, who will? …Their eyes are therefore lifted to their brothers.*]3[

All these are dimensions of the covenant of fate, born in the experience of slavery in Egypt. But there is an additional element of Jewish identity. Soloveitchik calls this the covenant of destiny)brit ye'ud(– entered into at Mount Sinai. This defines the people of Israel not as the object of persecution but the subject of a unique vocation, to become *"a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"*)Ex. 19:6(.

Under this covenant, we became defined not by what others do to us but by the task we have undertaken, the role we have chosen to play in history. In Egypt we did not choose to become slaves, that was a fate thrust upon us by someone else. We did, however, choose to become God's people at Sinai when said, "*We will do and obey"*)Ex. 24:7(. Destiny, call, vocation, purpose, task: these create not a machaneh but an edah, not a camp but a congregation.

Our task as a people of destiny is to bear witness to the presence of God – through the way we lead our lives)Torah(and the path we chart as a people across the centuries)history(.

G. K. Chesterton once wrote that "America is the only nation in the world that is founded on a creed."]4[Chesterton was notoriously antisemitic, and this evidently prevented him from recalling that the reason America was founded on a creed was that its founders, Puritans all, were steeped in what they called the Old Testament. They took as their model the covenant made between God and the Israelites at Sinai, and it was this that linked nationhood and the idea of a specific task or mission. Herman Melville gave this one of its classic expressions in his 1849 novel, *White-Jacket:*

> *We Americans are the peculiar, chosen people – the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world…. God has predestined, mankind expects, great things from our race; and great things we feel in our souls. The rest of the nations must soon be in our rear. We are pioneers of the world; the advance-guard, sent on through the wilderness of untried things, to break a new path in the New World that is ours.* Herman Melville, *White-Jacket*)Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000(, p. 153.]5[

It is the concept of covenant that gives Jewish)and American(identity this strange dual character. Nations are usually forged through long historical experience, through what happens to them – rather than what they consciously set themselves to do. They fall into the category of machaneh. Religions, on the other hand, are defined in terms of beliefs and a sense of mission. Each is constituted as an edah. What is unique about Judaism is the way it brings together these separate and quite distinct ideas. There are nations that contain many religions and there are religions that are spread over many nations, but only in the case of Judaism do religion and nation coincide.

This has had remarkable consequences. For almost two thousand years Jews were scattered throughout the world, yet they saw themselves)and were seen by others(as a nation – the world's first global nation. It was a nation held together not by geographical proximity or any other of the normal accompaniments of nationhood. Jews did not speak the same vernacular. Rashi spoke French, Maimonides Arabic. Rashi lived in a Christian culture, Maimonides in a Muslim one. Nor was their fate the same. While the Jews of Spain were enjoying their Golden Age, the Jews of northern Europe were being massacred in the Crusades. In the fifteenth century, when the Jews of Spain were being persecuted and expelled, those of Poland were enjoying a rare spring of tolerance.

What held Jews together during these centuries was shared faith. In the trauma that accompanied European Emancipation and the subsequent rise of racial antisemitism, many Jews lost that faith. Yet the events of the past century – persecution, pogroms, and the Holocaust, followed by the birth of the State of Israel and the constant fight to survive against war and terror – tended to bind Jews together in a covenant of fate in the face of the hostility of the world. So when Jews were divided by fate they were united by faith, and when they were divided by faith they were united again by fate. Such is the irony, or the providential nature, of Jewish history.

Judaism in the past two centuries has fissured and fractured into different edot: Orthodox and Reform, religious and secular, and the many subdivisions that continue to atomise Jewish life into non-communicating sects and subcultures. Yet in times of crisis we are still capable of heeding the call of collective responsibility, knowing as we do that Jewish fate tends to be indivisible. No Jew, to paraphrase John Donne, is an island, entirely to him- or herself. We are joined by the gossamer strands of collective memory, and these can sometimes lead us back to a sense of shared destiny.

So, a camp and a congregation. Judaism is both. This duality was given its first expression this week in Beha'alotecha, with the command: *"Make two trumpets of silver; make them of hammered work. They shall serve you to summon the congregation]edah[, and cause the camps]machanot[to journey."* Sometimes the clarion call speaks to our sense of faith. We are God's people, His emissaries and ambassadors, charged with making His presence real in the world by healing deeds and holy lives. At other times the trumpet that sounds and summons us is the call of fate: Jewish lives endangered in Israel or the Diaspora by the unremitting hostility of those who call themselves children of Abraham yet claim that they, not we, are his true heirs.

Whichever sound the silver instruments make, they call on that duality that makes Jews and Judaism inseparable. However deep the divisions between us, we remain one family in fate and faith. When the trumpet sounds, it sounds for us.

FOOTNOTES:

]1[Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Kol Dodi Dofek: Listen, My Beloved Knocks,* trans. David Z. Gordon) Jersey City, NJ: Ktav, 2006(. A translation also appears in Bernhard H. Rosenberg)ed.(, *Theological and Halachic Reflections on the Holocaust*)Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1992(.

]2[Sanhedrin 27b; Shavuot 39a.
]3[Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Matanot LeEvyonim* 10:2.

]4[G. K. Chesterton, *What I Saw in America*)New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1922(, 7.

]5[Also see Jonathan Sacks, "The Universal Story," in *Pesach Haggadah*)Jerusalem: Maggid, 2013(, 75–84.

Around the Shabbat Table:

]1[Do you think the Jewish people are a machaneh or an edah?

]2[Can you give examples from Jewish history when the Jewish people have behaved more like a machaneh and like an edah?

]3[Is the country where you live more like a machaneh or an edah?

]4[Do you think the Jewish people have been faithful to the covenant of fate)brit goral(and to the covenant of faith)brit ye'ud(?

]5[In our generation do you hear the "clarion call of the trumpets" beckoning us to the covenant of fate or more to the covenant of faith?

https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/behaalotecha/the-duality-of-camp-and-congregation/ Because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail or saved in my archives at PotomacTorah.org, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar.

Behaalotecha: Those Who Fall Between the Cracks -- Life Lessons From the Parshah

By Yehoshua B. Gordon, z"l * © Chabad 2024

Aaron the Lamplighter

The Torah portion of Behaalotecha begins with G d's instruction to Aaron, the High Priest, concerning the kindling of the Menorah in the Tabernacle.

Rashi explains the segue from the previous discussion about the tribal leaders' inaugural gifts and offerings in the Tabernacle:

> *When Aaron saw that each tribe presented an offering, yet his did not, he was distressed. Although the Levites were uniquely designated for holy service in the Tabernacle, Aaron was dismayed that neither he nor his tribe had any part in bringing the dedicatory offerings.*
>
> *"By your life," G d said to Aaron, comforting him, "your]part in the Tabernacle service[is greater than theirs, for you will light and prepare the lamps" of the Menorah*!1

Aaron was told that he would create the light of the Tabernacle. What was the function of the Tabernacle's light? It was not meant to illuminate the Tabernacle itself; rather, it was intended to bring G dly light into the world.2

Aaron is the custodian of the light of the world, responsible for bringing Divine, spiritual light into it. On a deeper level, Aaron brings light to the world by kindling the lamp that is the essence of every one of us.

King Solomon wrote, *"Man's soul is the lamp of the L-rd."*3 The Alter Rebbe, founder of Chabad, taught: *"…The Jewish people are called 'lamps.' A lamp comprises a vessel, wick, oil and flame. But one must kindle the flame, and then it sheds light."*4

Every Jewish soul is a lamp, and some of those lamps must be kindled — or rekindled.

The mishnah in *Ethics of the Fathers* famously states that Aaron's life mission was *"loving people and drawing them close to Torah."*5 Aaron would seek out every Jew and light their lamps. He was a lamplighter.

When describing how Aaron would light the Menorah's lamps, the verse uses the term behaalotecha, *"when you raise up."* According to Rashi, Aaron had to coax the flame until it burned on its own.

We Are All Lamplighters

*"Be of the disciples of Aaron,"*6 the Mishnah instructs. Each of us is tasked with the mission to seek out and kindle the spark within the soul of every Jew. And we mustn't simply kindle the lamp and walk away. We must do so in the manner of behaalotecha — coaxing the flame until it burns by itself — until it, too, becomes a lamplighter!

How do we kindle souls? What is the methodology? Not by creating our own approach or inventing our own system of outreach. We do it as disciples of Aaron: with unconditional love for every person and by drawing them close to Torah.]emphasis added[

Aaron did not change the Torah, and he did not compromise. He did not offer people a watered-down version. He said, *"I will bring you Torah. Undiluted. I will bring it one mitzvah at a time if need be, but we will not compromise."*

This, then, is our mandate: to kindle the flame of every Jew, ignite the soul of everyone we encounter, by bringing them closer to Torah.

Let us see how this theme appears again and again in our portion.

A Sight to Behold

As described in the portion of Naso, when the Jewish people traveled in the desert, they did so in a very specific formation, according to G d's detailed instructions.

Try to picture the incredible scene: the Tabernacle, magnificent and majestic — gold, silver, copper, ornate tapestries — at the center. Surrounding the Tabernacle is the tribe of Levi, including the families of Moses and Aaron. Surrounding the camp of the Levites on all four sides were the camps of the twelve tribes — four camps comprising three tribes on each side. Hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children, along with their belongings, were part of this formation.

Suddenly, the Clouds of Glory, which had been resting on the Tabernacle, rise and hover above this enormous encampment — a signal that it is time to move on. Two silver trumpets, commissioned especially for this purpose, are sounded to "… summon the community and to set the divisions in motion …"7

The people hear the trumpet blasts, and the entire camp kicks into motion. The Tabernacle is disassembled, its components loaded onto the wagons and the shoulders of the Levites, and then, as one formidable mass, each tribe under its flag and banner, the nation travels onward, led by the Clouds of Glory.

Lost and Found

In the fifth section of Behaalotecha, as the Jewish people begin to journey, the Torah again spells out the detailed formation of each tribe and camp, concluding with Dan: *"Then the banner of the camp of Dan set out, the collector for all the other camps, according to its legions."*8

Why is the Tribe of Dan referred to as "the collector for all the other camps?" Rashi, quoting the Jerusalem Talmud, explains, *"Because the Tribe of Dan was numerous, they traveled last, and if anyone had lost anything, they would find it and return it to him."*9

In the desert, the Tribe of Dan was in charge of the "Lost and Found."

When studying this as a young boy with my father, Rabbi Sholom B. Gordon, of blessed memory, he would refer to the Tribe of Dan as the caboose, the last car in the train. They brought up the rear, and all the other tribes relied on them to collect anything they had lost.

The Rebbe taught that in life, there is also a spiritual “Lost and Found.”

In education circles, they talk about the “kids who fall through the cracks” of the school system. There are cracks in the system of life, too, and there are people who fall through those cracks, who go off the beaten track and become lost to their brothers, lost to Judaism.

Who is going to concern themselves with these people? Who will make it their job to look after them, to show them the way back?

We cannot simply dismiss them, saying, “This is the correct path; if you follow it, that’s great, if you choose not to, you’re on your own!”

Historically, some parents would even sit Shiva — enduring a seven-day mourning period — for a child who strayed from the ways of the Torah, essentially telling these children, “You’re in the program? Good. You’re not? Sayonara! We’ll write you off.”

Along came the Tribe of Dan and said, *“We are in charge of bringing back those who are lost.”* If there were Jews who fell through the cracks and couldn’t keep up, the tribe of Dan gave them extra love, threw an arm around their shoulder, and said, *“Come with me; you are welcome in my home — you are welcome in my heart. We are all one people.”*

This is the beautiful system of outreach that the Rebbe pioneered and built. The Rebbe’s call is to each one of us: at a time when so many of our people are lost to external influences, we must all go the extra mile to help our fellow Jews find their way home.

A Second Chance

Chapter nine begins with G d’s instruction for the Jewish people to bring the Passover sacrifice in the desert. As it turned out, this was the only time in all 40 years of wandering in the desert that they brought this sacrifice; they went the next 39 years without bringing what was meant to be an annual offering.10 Still, in that first year, all the Jews did, indeed, bring the Passover sacrifice. Or, almost all the Jews did.

The verse states: *“There were men who were ritually unclean]because of contact with[a dead person, and therefore could not make the Passover sacrifice on that day. So they approached Moses and Aaron …]and[said … “We are ritually unclean]because of contact[with a dead person;]but[why should we be excluded so as not to bring the offering of the L-rd … with all the children of Israel?”*11

Why were these men ritually impure? According to many commentators, it was because they carried Joseph’s coffin during the Exodus from Egypt. Joseph had the people promise to take his coffin out, and these were the people who kept that promise hundreds of years later.

These were righteous people who did a good deed and seemed to be losing out as a result. “Why should we be excluded?” they cried, pleading with Moses to figure out a way that they, too, could partake in the mitzvah of the Passover sacrifice.

Moses was stumped. So he approached G d with their plea. The result? The mitzvah of Pesach Sheni, the “Second Passover.” G d instructed Moses: *“Speak to the children of Israel saying, Any person who becomes unclean from]contact with[the dead, or is on a distant journey… he shall make a Passover sacrifice for the L-rd.”*

Each year, exactly one month after Passover, anyone who was unable to bring the sacrifice in its proper time would be given a second chance.

In the teachings of Chassidism, we find profound symbolism here. Every Jew that is "far away" or "ritually impure" — all those innocent souls who, tragically, have fallen through the cracks and drifted away from Torah and Judaism — cry out from their very essence:

> *"Why should I be excluded? I want a proper Jewish education too. I want to study Torah. Should I lose out because I live too far from a Torah center? Should I lose out because my parents didn't know any better? Should I be excluded because I was born into a family that was far from traditional Jewish practice? I am as Jewish as every other Jew!"*

The Rebbe, quoting his father-in-law, the Sixth Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Shneersohn, writes: *"The theme of Pesach Sheni is that it is never too late. It is always possible to put things right. Even if one is ritually impure, or far away, and even in a case when this)impurity, etc.(was deliberate — nonetheless he can correct it."*12

It's never too late to return to and re-embrace Judaism.

It's Up to Us

Who should provide this second chance? Who should reach out to those who are spiritually distant, and lovingly guide them back home? Every single one of us must step up and shoulder this responsibility!

In 1940, in the midst of the Holocaust, the Sixth Rebbe miraculously arrived on the shores of the United States and established the modern-day Tribe of Dan.

On a very personal note, both of my parents, of blessed memory, were at the pier in New York Harbor when the Rebbe disembarked from the ship and proclaimed, *"I came to the shores of the United States to show that America is no different!"* The Rebbe asserted that Judaism could thrive in America and serve as a foundation for its revival across the globe.

My father was among the first ten students of the yeshiva that the Rebbe established that very day. He did not stay in the yeshiva for long, however, for he was among the first handful of shluchim)emissaries(sent by the Rebbe to various cities to begin the nascent work of building Jewish infrastructure and raising Jewish awareness. After my parents' wedding, they were sent out as a team, first to Springfield, Mass., and ultimately to Newark, N.J., meriting to serve as the Rebbe's emissaries for over five decades.

The Rebbe succeeded his father-in-law and assumed the mantle of leadership of Chabad in 1950, guiding its phenomenal growth throughout the world.

This is the tribe that I was born into six months before the passing of the Sixth Rebbe, and this is the ethos that I grew up with. So it was only natural for my wife and I, along with our 3-week-old son, to move to Encino, Calif., in 1973, to establish Chabad of the Valley. At the time, there were probably no more than about 100 Chabad institutions worldwide. Today, thank G d, there are 32 centers -- 13 just in the San Fernando Valley -- and over 6,500 shluchim families worldwide, operating over 3,500 institutions in over 110 countries. No Jew is too far — literally or figuratively.

Let us strive to incorporate these pivotal teachings from the parshah of Behaalotecha into our daily lives. We must all be members of the modern-day Tribe of Dan. We must all be lamplighters, kindling every Jewish soul with the light of Torah and Judaism, and coaxing their flames until their souls burn brightly on their own, until they, too, become lamplighters and ambassadors of G d's light!

FOOTNOTES:

1. Midrash Tanchuma, Behaalotecha 3.
2. Shabbat 22b.

3. Proverbs 20:27.

4. *Hayom Yom* entry for 10 Sivan.

5. Avot 1:12.

6. Ibid.

7. Numbers 10:2.

8. Numbers 10:25.

9. Rashi, Numbers 10:25.

10. For more on this, see: *Why No Paschal Offering for 39 Years in the Desert?*

11. Numbers 9:6-7.

12. Hayom Yom entry for 14 Iyar.

13. Ed. Note: There were 26 centers at the time of Rabbi Gordon's passing in 2016; it has since expanded to 32.

* Rabbi Yehoshua Gordon directed Chabad of the Valley in Tarzana, CA until his passing in 2016. Adapted by Rabbi Mottel Friedman from classes and sermons that Rabbi Gordon presented in Encino, CA and broadcast on Chabad.org. "Life Lessons from the Parshah" is a project of the Rabbi Joshua B. Gordon Living Legacy Fund, benefiting the 32 centers of Chabad of the Valley, published by Chabad of the Valley and Chabad.org.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/6470974/jewish/Those-Who-Fall-Between-the-Cracks.htm

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Beha'alotecha: Passover 2.0

by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky *

Passover 2.0

> *On 14 Nisan, G-d commanded the people to observe Passover. However, some were ritually defiled and unable to participate. They complained about being left out, and in response, G-d informed Moses that whoever was unable to perform the Passover rituals on time should do so a month later, on 14 Iyar.*)Numbers 9:1–14(

Passover requires preparation, abstinence from leaven, and lasts for a week. The second Passover, in contrast, requires almost no preparation, no prohibition of leaven, and lasts for one day.

This is because at Passover – our annual rebirth as a people and as individuals – we begin life anew, with a clean slate. As such, we can follow the path of righteousness, ascending the ladder of spiritual growth by refraining from all evil and doing only good.

The second Passover, in contrast, is the path of repentance. Repentance occurs as a sudden inspiration, and therefore does not entail extensive preparation. Repentance is a humbling admission of fault, and therefore leaven and the inflated egocentricity it represents are not threats. Finally, repentance is a radical departure from our previous, flawed behavior, which occurs in an instant and is therefore celebrated for only one day.

In the dynamics of spiritual life, we are sometimes on the path of righteousness and sometimes on the path of repentance, and should therefore become expert at following both.

— from *Daily Wisdom 3*

May G-d grant resounding victory and peace in the Holy Land.

Gut Shabbos,

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
Kehot Publication Society

* Insights from the Rebbe.

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Covenant and Conversation
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

From Despair to Hope

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.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

The Anatomy of Leadership – What Must the Leader Ignite?

"When you kindle the Menora…" (Numbers 8:2) Our Torah portion recounts the watershed experience of the Israelites in the desert: the beginning of the end, the devastating denouement which unravels into the demise of an entire generation locked out of the Promised Land. What caused the miracles of the Exodus, the inspiration of the Sinai Revelation, the desert constellation of proud, flag-raising tribes surrounding the Sanctuary of God to so pitifully degenerate into the faithless, fearful, rebellious, and reactionary squabbles which characterize the succeeding chapters of the book of Numbers?

Our sages signal the beginning of the change by dramatically suggesting that chapter eleven of the book of Numbers begins a new and separate biblical book: the verse opens, vayehi, literally "and it was," but onomatopoeically suggesting trouble, vay, woe and distress (vayehi ha'am k'mitonenim). It is a small but tragic book within a book which we are now about to read, a tale of self-destruction. How did it happen? In order to attempt to answer the initial question, let us review this Torah reading of Behaalotcha from its very beginning – which is Numbers, chapter eight – and we shall find that in addition to our query concerning the genesis of the national disaster, many smaller questions abound.

First of all, our biblical portion appears to be recording a collection of disparate incidents which seem to lack any cohesive connection.

The portion of Behaalotcha begins with the kindling of the Menora by Aaron – a Sanctuary accoutrement and divine service which would have been far more appropriately placed in the portion of Tetzaveh, which initially discusses the construction of the Sanctuary and the role of Aaron and his descendants therein (Exodus 25–30). Indeed our most classic commentary, Rashi, is disturbed by this apparent misplacement, from the book of Exodus to the book of Numbers, and he therefore connects the opening of Behaalotcha to the description of the gifts of the princes of the tribes at the dedication ceremony of the Sanctuary (which we read at the conclusion of the previous biblical portion of Naso). Rashi cites a midrash in which Aaron is upset that the kohanim had been overlooked at the dedication ceremonies, and so, in effect, God tells Moses to appease Aaron: "Your task, [Aaron], is greater than theirs [the princes of the tribes)], because you will prepare and kindle the Menora" (Rashi, ad loc.).

But Rashi's comments seem to raise more questions than they answer. First of all, if Rashi is correct, then the Menora kindling should have concluded the portion of Naso instead of opening the portion of Behaalotcha. Secondly, why would Aaron be satisfied for not having been given a public role in an auspicious ceremony with the consolation prize of the onerous task of cleaning and kindling the Menora early every morning before a non-existent audience?! It's almost like telling the invited guest speaker at a fancy public dinner whom the hosts forgot to introduce that he ought not be concerned, since he will be honored with clearing the tables and cleaning the dishes early the next morning.

What then follows in the biblical text is a myriad of disparate incidents: the Levites are chosen over the firstborn for religious leadership, the second-chance opportunity of bringing the Paschal lamb sacrifice is provided for those who were ritually impure or a distance away from the Sanctuary on the fourteenth of Nisan, a cloud by day and a fire by night is directing the camp of Israel, the trumpet call which summons the nation to war and inaugurates the festivals is described, the heads of the army of each tribe are named, Yitro's return to Midian is recorded, and the Ark of God is praised for its power to scatter the enemies of Israel. What conceptual scheme can possibly unite these various and disconnected commands and occurrences?

And then begins chapter eleven, the "new book" of the Bible: "And it was ["vay," "woe"] that the people were k'mitonenim [as murmurers] an evil thing in the ears of God; and when God heard it, His anger was kindled, and the fire of God raged a fire among them, which devoured them until the outermost part of the camp." (Numbers 11:1)

Here the questions are even more disturbing. What does the term mitonen mean? As we saw in our last commentary, this is the only time the word appears in the Bible – and the commentaries are all perplexed. It sounds close to mitlonen, which means "to complain," and therefore most translations render "murmerers," following the Rashbam. But what were they murmuring against? The Bible does not record any reason for their murmurings, but does insist that it was considered evil by God, who expressed His apparent anger by dispatching a devouring fire.

And then, given the correlation between the fire and the murmuring, one would expect the Israelites to push all future complaints onto the "back burner." But, then, seemingly out of nowhere, the Israelites cry out for meat (Numbers 11:4). This is the last thing we expect to hear, not only because it flies in the face of the punishment they just received but also because they seem to be complaining for

no reason. After the splitting of the Reed Sea they had complained of hunger, and the Almighty solved the problem with the miraculous heaven-sent manna, a type of coriander seed; and long before Marx and Engels, each family received a sufficient portion for each family member – each in accordance with his or her need. Moreover, according to the Midrash, they certainly had no cause for complaint, since the taste of the individual portion of manna was determined by the culinary desires of the individual, when he or she made the blessing before tasting the "seed." If one could think beef-wellington and receive that exact flavor from the manna – and without calories and cholesterol – who would need any other kind of food?

And then the most disturbing problem of all: when Moses bitterly complains to God about his difficulties in leading such an ungrateful, querulous, and impatient nation which is now desirous of meat, the Almighty responds, "Gather for Me seventy men from amongst the wise elders of Israel" in order to appoint rabbinical and judicial leaders to assist Moses in his duties of leadership. The people cry for meat – and God gives them rabbinical judges. How does the divine solution answer the problem?! (Although I am certainly aware of the fact that many congregations "devour" their rabbis, I hardly believe that God was thinking in such terms!)

I would like to begin my response to all of these questions by suggesting that – surprisingly and tragically – it is often when an individual has "everything," and should be most grateful and satisfied, that he or she feels most at a loss. Witness the biblical testimony, "But now our souls are dried up, with nothing but the manna before our eyes" (Numbers 11:6). Why should their souls be dry? They ought to be fertile and blessed, energized with limitless possibilities! Why should newly-freed individuals, divinely protected against any onslaught from the elements, sound like inhabitants of T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land? They should see the desert as their gateway to freedom! And why should manna affect their souls? It is the body which requires the nutrients, and it is the body which responds to delectable flavors and exotic tastes!

The great psychologist and founder of logotherapy, Victor Frankel, in his wise and thought-provoking book Man's Search for Meaning, maintains that the most profound existential human desire is not the search for pleasure (as Freud thought), nor is it the search for power (as Jung and Adler thought), but is rather a search for meaning and significance! He argues that the concentration camp victim with the obsessive goal of saving the life of his child lived each day with more zest than the retired American millionaire who is bereft of plans, purpose, goals. "Pity the person who has realized his every dream" – because the true excitement of life is a byproduct of the striving, is the adrenalin produced in the heat of the chase to capture the prize.

The Bible introduced the downward slide of the Israelites with the Hebrew word k'mitonenim, translated as "like murmurers." But the Hebrew mitlonen means murmur or complaint; mitonen is comprised of two Hebrew words, suggests Rabbi S.R. Hirsch – met, a corpse, and onen, a mourner found in the initial stage of mourning between the period of the death and burial of the deceased. This strange and compound word reflects a sense of impotence, malaise – the sadness, frustration, and emptiness which comes from a feeling that there is nothing left for the individual to do, there is no purpose to any of his actions at this point. The mourner is overwhelmed with feelings of frustration, purposelessness, emptiness. Ponder the fact that tiredness rarely comes from hard and satisfying work; the retired, bored businessman is the one who yawns the most.

When God freed the Israelites from Egyptian slavery and provided them with all their needs in the desert, they lost the dreams and ideals which had sparked their lives and ignited their energies while they were still slaves in Egypt. Now they want "meat," which may just be a way of saying that they want something to bite their teeth into! Enough with living the "life of Riley" in a divinely supported desert kollel!

Enough with the imagination creating the perfect menu. Fish is better, even those salty, smelly sardines which the Nile spit up together with its frothy film, because although they tasted putrid, while we ate them we could still dream of better times to come – and work to bring those dreams to fruition. Yes, we crave "cucumbers and watermelons and onions and leeks"! What these vegetables have in common is that they have to be planted, nurtured, and harvested. They require sun, water, care, patience, and, most important of all, work. No overnight onions, no express melons. The language of "dry souls" tells us that although God provided everything necessary for the body, the Israelite soul was bereft of purpose, significance, meaningful dedication to an ideal. We have seen that the author of HaKtav VeHaKabbala, Rabbi Yaakov Mecklenberg, interprets mitonenim as coming from the Hebrew ana, whither, where. The Israelites were wandering hither and thither, here, there, and everywhere in search of a goal and direction, desperately seeking a compass to point towards a clear vision and goal, a program of action that would give meaning and purpose to their lives. They had it all – and therefore they lacked what everyone needs most: a purpose to their lives, a reason for being, a program of action to give meaningful direction to their days.

I believe that both interpretations of mitonenim are saying the same thing. The nation which had been so certain of its mission when it came out of Egypt – the freed slaves who had felt in every fiber of their being that they were "a holy nation and kingdom of priests"; the Israelite who had sung at the Reed Sea, "You shall bring us and plant us in the mountain of Your inheritance…. Your hands, O God shall prepare a Sanctuary" (Exodus 15:16–17) – had lost their focus, had forgotten their ideal.

The Israelites did not know what they wanted because they did not understand what they needed – like a baby who is kvetching for something, and will continue to kvetch and reject whatever he is given because he doesn't understand that he is teething and that is what is causing his discomfort. The Israelites thought it was the meat, or the fish, or the watermelon that they wanted – but each kvetch led to another kvetch, since what they really needed was a goal, a significant purpose.

And the truly tragic truth is that the Israelites lost their spiritual compass because they felt removed – even alienated – from Moses, that fiery leader who had initially inspired the Egyptian slaves with a vision of freedom in order to serve their God of compassion, morality, and peace in Israel, in order to spearhead a universal movement to enthrone God as King of the Universe (Exodus 15:18). But Moses couldn't maintain the excitement, couldn't sustain the vision, could no longer nourish the dream. Why not?

Perhaps it was because he had become too close to God, too involved in constant divine communication in order to receive the Torah, that he lacked the requisite time, energy, and patience to slowly and incrementally pastor and educate a stubborn and complaining people. Gersonides (also known as the Ralbag) goes so far as to interpret in this way the biblical words "they [the nation] would not listen to Moses because of his [Moses'] impatience," his inability to inspire the Hebrews with their mission to bring about world redemption (Exodus 6:9, Gersonides ad loc.). Perhaps Moses simply became too tired…the kvetching nation could wear down even a Moses!

I believe this understanding will lead us to the glue which binds together the various segments of our Torah portion Behaalotcha: the search for leaders who will reignite the fire and reinspire the dream, a cadre of visionaries who will help Moses direct the people to begin working again towards their covenantal goal. Hence, after appointing Aaron as the custodian over the kindling of the Menora, our biblical portion explains that the firstborns lost their initial position of leadership to the kohanim because they worshipped the Golden Calf, because they followed false gods of materialistic and hedonistic excess. Our portion goes on to teach that if there are those who are ritually defiled and cannot participate in the national-religious ritual of the Paschal lamb at its appointed time they must be given another chance at another date (Pesaḥ Sheni); and this second chance even extends to those

who were away from the place of sacrifice at the appointed time, and even to those who may have been there geographically but were distant psychologically, emotionally, religiously – even to those who may have been at the doorsteps of the Holy Temple, but lacked the will, the spiritual desire, to participate in the national sacrifice (Numbers 9:9, Rashi ad loc.). Leadership must reach out to the alienated, to the spiritually distant.

Religious inspirers must imbue the nation with the realization that they are being directed by God – in the guise of a cloud by day and a fire by night – and must instill within them the courage to go to war if need be to protect their nation, their mission, their future destiny. Leadership must point the people towards the idea of Torah, a morality and a lifestyle which expresses its goals by means of sacred-time celebrations, and which has the power – when adhered to – to scatter our enemies to the wind. Yitro, who originally counseled Moses concerning the necessity of additional rabbinic-judicial leadership, leaves the desert for Midian; perhaps he returned to his home because he had foreseen the crisis but was not listened to in time to have prevented it from coming.

Finally, why does our portion begin with the Menora? The Menora, or candelabrum, symbolizes the Israelite nation, light unto the nations of the world. The single most important task of leadership is to foster the fuel, to kindle the spark, to fan the flame, to ignite the imagination, to provide the illumination. This is what Rashi has God say to the kohanim, biologically destined to lead as teachers of Torah, in his opening commentary to Behaalotcha: “Your task is greater than theirs [the princes of the other tribes]: you kindle and prepare the Menora.” You must imbue the Menora, Israel entire (Klal Yisrael) the light of all the nations, with the vision and the mission to enter the Land of Israel and redeem the world.

Hence the truest task of a leader: to supply the vision and the volition, the dream and the desire. Moses did that most effectively for the Hebrews in Egypt, for fleeing freedmen at the shores of the Reed Sea, and he did it for all future generations of Jews through the divine words he left as his legacy for eternity. Perhaps it was precisely his second focus which made it impossible for him to truly lead the desert generation with the day-to-day, minute-to-minute concern that that congregation, as well as every congregation, require; perhaps it is truly “mission impossible” to be involved with the eternal generations as well as with one’s own temporal generation at one and the same time. But the angst of the desert generation calls out to leaders of every single generation to the end of time: give us meaning or you give us death; inspire our lives with significance, or we will dry up and die. Ignite our souls with a passionate ideal, and we will follow you to the ends of the earth.

A Hasidic Postscript - A Hasidic rebbe once told his disciples that every modern invention contains an important message from God. “What can we learn from the telephone?” they asked. “That what you say at one end of the world can be heard at the other end; two people can keep a secret – but only if one of them is dead.” “What can we learn from a telegram?” “That every word must be counted, and that every letter costs money.” “What can we learn from a train?” “That if you come one minute late, you can lose the entire trip. But most importantly, you can learn from a train that one fiery engine can move along thousands of people – but there must be fire in its belly!”

The Person in the Parsha
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

A Second Chance

I was in a total fog during my first year in high school. I am convinced that my experience then was not unique. I entered a strange school, much larger than the one I had attended previously, and was not given the benefit of any orientation to the new environment. I did not know what to expect, and I was not informed about what was expected of me.

I struggled academically and socially. But I knew one thing, and that was that I liked to write, and I sought to learn how to do so.

Toward the end of the year, I learned that there was a special track in the English department for those who were interested in writing. The track was called "Journalism for Sophomores" and was open to those who did well in their freshman English courses. But, as I said, I was in a fog that freshman year and was merely passing freshman English.

Nevertheless, I applied for entry into the journalism class. I was turned down. But I persisted and made it my business to arrange for an interview with Mr. Joe Brown, the instructor for the journalism class, and also the advisor for the student newspaper.

I will never forget Mr. Brown, because he was impressed by my perseverance and gave me a second chance explaining that many freshmen often become overwhelmed by the novelty of their new environment and don’t always excel to their full potential. He would allow me into the elite journalism class with the condition that I would prove myself by doing extra essays, and doing them well, during the first six weeks of the semester.

I fulfilled his conditions and spent not one, but three years in the special journalism section under his tutelage. I enjoyed it, learned a great deal, became one of the editors of the prize-winning student newspaper, and was elected editor-in-chief of the senior yearbook. To this day, every time I put a pencil to paper or fingers to a computer keyboard, I think of Joe Brown.

In this week's Torah portion, Parshat Beha’alotecha, we read of a group of people who, like me, were unable to fulfill their responsibilities the first time around. In their case, it was the mitzvah of bringing the Passover offering on the 14th day of the month of Nisan, which they failed to do. For them, it was not the strangeness of a new school that prevented them from doing the mitzvah properly. Rather it was because "...they were unclean, having come into contact with a dead body, so that they could not keep the Passover on that day." (Numbers 9:6)

They could easily have taken the approach of shrugging their shoulders and saying something like, "We tried our best, but circumstances were such that we were unable to perform the Passover sacrifice. We have a good excuse, so let's move on."

But that was not their reaction. Instead, "...they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day." They wanted, nay demanded, a second chance.

"Unclean though we are by reason of a corpse, why must we be debarred from presenting the Lord's offering at its set time with the rest of the Israelites?" (Numbers 9:7) They persisted and insisted upon having the same benefits of the rest of the people, those who did not suffer the set of circumstances that denied this particular group of men this type of privilege.

Most fascinating is the fact that Moses did not know what to tell them. As far as I can tell, this is the first time in the Bible, and quite possibly the first time in the history of the human race, that a group of people asked for a second chance. Moses was unaware of a precedent for the privilege that this group was requesting.

So Moses, having the kind of access that none of us has today to the Divine, said to them, "Stand by, and let me hear what instructions the Lord gives about you." (Numbers 9:8)

The Lord gave them a second chance. He told Moses that forevermore in the history of the Jewish people, when individuals are faced with circumstances that prevent them from bringing the Passover offering in its proper time, "they shall offer it in the second month..." God, in His infinite mercy, gave a second chance, a kind of a do-over session, to a group of people who could have easily given up, but who did not want to be left out and therefore persevered in their search for a spiritual privilege.

There is so much to be learned from this story. Although we cannot play God, we can certainly emulate Him and give others a second chance. We need not strictly enforce all of our rules but can recognize that there are circumstances in the lives of men that prevent them from doing the right thing the first time around and who, therefore, require a little "slack.”

But the great lesson for me in the story is the value of perseverance, of not taking no for an answer but continuing to knock upon the doors of opportunity. These men who were "unclean because of their contact with a corpse" are among the heroes (in their case, unnamed heroes) of the entire biblical narrative. Had they not persevered, we would never have learned of the Almighty's provision of a Pesach Sheni, an opportunity to compensate for the excusable failure to do it right the first time.

So I learned much from Mr. Joseph Brown about how an empathic teacher can bring out the best in a confused youngster. But I also learned, very early in my own life, about the value of persistence.

'Tis a lesson you should heed, Try, try again.
If at first you don't succeed, Try, try again.

I am tempted at this point to hold a contest and offer a prize to the reader who can identify the source of that famous quote. But I will forego that temptation and tell you that it was first published in A Teacher's Manual, by early 19th century educator Thomas H. Palmer.

Or in the words of another relative unknown, William Ward: Four steps to achievement: plan purposefully, prepare prayerfully, proceed positively, pursue persistently.

Or, finally, in the words of the famous Goethe: In the realm of ideas everything depends on enthusiasm; in the real world, all rests on perseverance.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

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?"

Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

I was filled with dread and I panicked. What had happened?

I had given an address to a large audience and then I stepped down from the stage without returning my lapel mic back to the organisers.

Twenty minutes later, I suddenly felt it was still on me – and it was on! I started to panic! What had I said during the previous 20 minutes? Who had I been talking to? What private conversations had been heard by others?

Much to my relief, actually, I hadn't said anything that turned out to be embarrassing but this reminded me of a passage in Parshat Beha'alotecha, in which Aharon and Miriam maligned their brother Moshe. They said (Bamidbar 12:2), "Does God only speak to him? He speaks to us as well." insinuating that Moshe thought he was greater than any of them. The Torah then says, "Vayishma Hashem." – "And Hashem heard."

The Sifri comments that from these two words 'vayishma Hashem' we understand that nobody else was there. It was a private conversation between Mirian and Aharon. Moshe wasn't aware of it. But 'vayishma Hashem' – God did hear.

Here Hashem wants us always to be mindful of an important teaching, in Pirkei Avot (2:1). Wherever we are and whatever we do "Da ma lemalla mimcha," – "Know what is above you," "Ayin roah," – "An eye that sees," "v'ozen shoma'at," – "and an ear that hears," "vechol maasecha besefer nichtavim." – "and all your deeds are recorded."

We should never forget that whatever it is we're doing or saying in life, it's never totally off the record, because the mic is always on.

Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

The Power of Second Chances: Parshat Beha'alotecha's Message on Adaptation
Rabbanit Rivky Krestt

How do we learn to pivot? To change our frame of mind to adapt to a new situation?

The ability to adapt to a new situation is one of the soft skills that are essential for growth and development. This parasha relates to us a case about the unavoidable reality that humans will need to pivot and a built-in fix that Moshe models and then establishes for Bnai Yisrael.

The parasha begins with one the high points of the entire Torah. After months of working and building the mishkan, after a year of desert life since leaving Egypt, Bnai Yisrael are ready to travel to the land of Israel.

The drama is palpable as we read: We can almost feel the ananaim rising from their location. We can almost hear Moshe proclaiming.

וַיְהִי בִּנְסֹעַ הָאָרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה קוּמָה ו ה וְיָפֻצוּ אֹיְבֶיךָ וְיָנֻסוּ מְשַׂנְאֶיךָ מִפָּנֶיךָ׃

וּבְנֻחֹה יֹאמַר שׁוּבָה ה רִבְבוֹת אַלְפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל׃ ס {פ}

But leaving the midbar means leaving the life to which they have become accustomed to for the last year. Some members of the nation are not ready for the change and they begin complaining:

וַיְהִי הָעָם כְּמִתְאֹנְנִים רַע בְּאָזְנֵי ה וַיִּשְׁמַע ה וַיִּחַר אַפּוֹ וַתִּבְעַר־בָּם אֵשׁ יְהוָֹה ה בִּקְצֵה הַמַּחֲנֶה׃

This event is the first in a series of events in which Bnai Yisrael begin a downward spiral that will culminate in Chet HaMeraglim and the decree that this generation will be denied entry into the Land of Israel and will be condemned to wander in the desert for forty years until they have died off.

Bnai Yisrael don't know the end of the story at this point. But already the ideal journey to enter the land of Israel on a national and spiritual high is tainted.

What do we do with this reality? More importantly, what message can we learn from this change of course?

On the one hand, it is always challenging to cope with a new reality. On the other hand, ups and downs are part of the human condition. How we make sense of it is always a challenge.

This is the question that Sheryl Sandberg, the COO of Facebook, addresses in her book "Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience and Finding Joy" co-authored with psychologist Adam Grant after the sudden death of her husband, Dave Goldberg, in 2015.

The book details Sandberg's personal journey through grief and how she rebuilt her life, while also providing insights into how others can overcome adversity. "Life is never perfect," she writes. "We all live some form of Option B."

This quote reflects the stark reality that sometimes, the ideal or preferred situation (Option A) is unattainable, often due to unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances. When this happens, the only choice is to make the best of what remains (Option B).

This week's parsha is rife with Option B.

In fact, with all due respect to Sheryl Sandberg, our parsha gives us a similar message in a different context. Right before Bnai Yisrael begin to travel, the pasuk regales us with a communal celebration of Pesach on the first anniversary of our exodus from Egypt.

Passover is known as the holiday of Jewish Identity and of freedom. As we prepare to

enter the Land of Israel, we are reaffirming our national identity. It also marks the next stage in our freedom as we prepare to return to the land of our ancestors. And we garner the strength and resolve to undertake unfathomable task of entering the land of Israel and conquering it. The people of Israel are not warriors (yet) and this is a scary time.

There are several times in Tanach that we see the celebration of Passover as a means of rededicating and rejuvenating the religious and national identity of the people. Joshua celebrated Pesach right before he entered the land of Israel for the first time. Hezekiah Pesach as a part of kick-starting his religious renewal to save the First Temple. Josiah celebrated Pesach as part of his religious renewal to recommit the Jewish people to Hashem. Ezra celebrated Pesach at the beginning of the Second Temple to rededicate the people to our cause. Each celebration of פסח in Tanakh is a signpost to us on the importance of celebrating our anniversary as a people and our relationship with Hashem.

It is precisely at this moment of affirmation and identity building that a group of people spoke up. They were upset that they were left out of the celebration:

וַיְהִי֙ אֲנָשִׁ֣ים אֲשֶׁ֔ר הָי֥וּ טְמֵאִ֖ים לְנֶ֣פֶשׁ אָדָ֑ם וְלֹא־יָכְל֣וּ לַעֲשֹׂת־הַפֶּ֣סַח בַּיּ֣וֹם הַה֗וּא וַיִּקְרְב֤וּ לִפְנֵי֙ מֹשֶׁ֣ה וְלִפְנֵ֣י אַהֲרֹ֔ן בַּיּ֥וֹם הַה֖וּא׃

וַיֹּ֣אמְרוּ֩ הָאֲנָשִׁ֨ים הָהֵ֜מָּה אֵלָ֗יו אֲנַ֤חְנוּ טְמֵאִים֙ לְנֶ֣פֶשׁ אָדָ֔ם לָמָּ֥ה נִגָּרַ֖ע לְבִלְתִּ֣י הַקְרִ֣יב אֶת־קָרְבַּ֣ן יְהוָ֔ה בְּמֹעֲדֹ֖ו בְּתֹ֣וךְ בְּנֵ֥י יִשְׂרָאֵֽל׃

There was a group of men who were ritually impure due to contact with a dead body and were unable to bring the Korban Pesach on the appointed day. They approached Moshe and asked why they should be excluded from bringing the offering too?

Can you imagine what it must have been like to be one of those people? The first opportunity they had to mark the anniversary of the Exodus, which was not only an event in the history of the nation – but it was also THE event. The paradigm that would mark the rest of Jewish history in perpetuity. And they were being denied the opportunity to participate.

In response, Moshe did something unexpected. He validated their question, conceded that that he did not know the answer and consulted Hashem directly. It was at this point that Hashem told Moses about a second chance: Pesach Sheni. A new holiday was created.

בַּחֹ֣דֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִ֗י בְּאַרְבָּעָה֙ עָשָׂ֣ר י֔וֹם בֵּ֥ין הָעַרְבַּ֖יִם יַעֲשׂ֣וּ אֹתֹ֑ו עַל־מַצֹּ֥ות וּמְרֹרִ֖ים יֹאכְלֻֽהוּ׃

לֹא־יַשְׁאִ֤ירוּ מִמֶּ֙נּוּ֙ עַד־בֹּ֔קֶר וְעֶ֥צֶם לֹא יִשְׁבְּרוּ־בֹ֑ו כְּכָל־חֻקַּ֥ת הַפֶּ֖סַח יַעֲשׂ֥וּ אֹתֹֽו׃

Professor Ronald Heifetz, a Senior Lecturer at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, developed a framework for thinking about situations like this. He coined the term, “adaptive challenges” and “technical challenges.”

Adaptive challenges involve deep changes in values, beliefs, roles, and relationships, requiring us to learn, innovate, and adapt. For example, Pesach Sheni was instituted to allow those who were ritually impure or on a distant journey during Passover to observe the holiday a month later, thus adapting the community’s practices to accommodate inclusivity and flexibility. This required a shift in understanding and acceptance within the community to recognize and embrace this change. This shift was not immediately obvious, but Hashem gave His answer and, thereby, introduced Bnai Yisrael to coping with adaptive challenges. This is going to be a crucial approach for the nation as Plan A is uprooted.

This story of adaptive challenges, or second chances, precedes the debacle of the מתאוננים, the complainers. Embedded within the story of Pesach Sheni we see Moshe modelling what to do when we don’t have the answers and we need to re-adjust. This group of people wanted to do the ideal, bring the Korban Pesach, but they were faced with reality that precluded that ability and learned to navigate to the Option B, to bring the korban a month later.

The story of the Passover Sheini may seem out of place at first glance but when we view it from the lens of Hashem preceding the cure before the affliction, of הקדים רפואה למכה, we see the interchange as an excellent springboard for considering adaptive behavior. Through this lens, we see a glimmer of hope for the children of Israel who are experiencing the very real phenomenon of having to readjust to something less than ideal. When things don’t go according to plan, we need to acknowledge it, analyze it and implement something in its place. It may not be ideal, but it might be just what we need.

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

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.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah
by Rabbi Label Lam

A Yomi Guy

HASHEM spoke to Moshe saying: Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and cleanse them… (Bamidbar 8:5-6)

Take the Levites: Take them with words: You are fortunate in that you have merited to become attendants of the Omnipresent – L'MAKOM). — Rashi

So, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her handmaid, at the end of ten years of Avram's dwelling in the land of Canaan, and she gave her to Avram her husband for a wife. (Breishis 16:3)

So, Sarai, Abram's wife, took: She took her with words, "You are fortunate that you have merited to cleave to a holy body such as this one."

How can someone take another person? Is that possible? A person has a mind and a will of their own. They are not an object. Obviously, one must appeal to their deepest desire and noblest sense of self to gain their willing cooperation. This is the essence of leadership. Here we have two primary examples of how to "take a person". What is the nature of the appeal?

How often must one "take another person"? Is this a common request? It may be more common than we think. I cannot tell you how many times people have asked me to make this person become more or less of this or that. "Rabbi, change my husband. Make him a nicer person." When I meet the husband, he doesn't believe he needs to change or he is not a willing participant. What can I do!?

I have come to the grand conclusion, after all these years that nobody can change another person. It's just like the old bad joke; How many psychiatrists does it take to change a lightbulb? One, but the lightbulb has got to want to change! That says it all.

If a person doesn't want to change then no one can make him change. The person has to be convinced that it is truly in his best interest that making some adjustment is necessary. One needs clarity. Healthy and long- lasting change does not come from coercion or pressure, from within or from without.

The Navi says, "Lo b'Koach v Lo b'Chayal, Ki Im B'R'Ruchi Neum HASHEM" – "Not with power and not with might, but rather with My spirit says HASHEM". Exerting will power and an athletic attitude succeeds temporarily like most diets but then the person tires and yields. It was not a real change.

Clarity of purpose and method pave the way for healthy and lasting improvements. Rashi explains in both the case of the recruiting the Leviim for their chosen task and Hagar for her role in history that an appeal was made to their noblest sense of self. You are being invited to do something Holy and historic. Who can resist? This is a game changer for you, the world, and the greatest opportunity for your ideal self. When grooming a new preferred behavior, it is enormously helpful to not only develop a new routine and habit but also a new identity that supports it and sustains it as an incorporated self-image.

I had been involved for many years in the Daf HaYomi program even then. I was in the habit of learning steadily for a couple of days, then missing a day or two and then catching up again. That's how it went for too long. I don't think I ever went a few weeks without missing and having to make up a Daf. Then, 13 years ago my wife and I went for Shabbos to friends of ours in Boston. On Sunday morning, my friend invited me to attend his daily Daf Shiur. I enjoyed the Shiur very much.

My friend asked me rhetorically, "You know what's great about the Daf!?" I wasn't sure where he was going. He sensed I was open to hear his take. I was listening carefully. Then he said enthusiastically, "It's Yomi!!! It's Every Day! YOMI!!!" He looked to me for my approval and I nodded with renewed enthusiasm and echoed his profound point, "It's YOMI!!" I was too embarrassed to disagree so I swallowed it wholesale and declared aloud. I was suddenly on board. Because of that brief exchange, I have not missed a day in the last 13 years. He was right. I recognized it. I agreed to it and the rest is history, a new history. In one swift moment, I was taken, by a word, and with a new identity, I became a YOMI guy.

BS"D

To: parsha@groups.io
From: Chaim Shulman <cshulman@gmail.com>
& Allen Klein <allen.klein@gmail.com>

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subject: Rav Frand - The Greater the Gavra, the Greater the Gratitude

Rabbi Yissocher Frand
Parshas Behaaloscha
The Greater the Gavra, the Greater the Gratitude

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: #1340 – Bringing a Sefer Torah to the House of an Avail or Temporary Minyan. Good Shabbos

The pasuk in Parshas BeHa'alosecha says, "And the people were k'mis'onenim (as murmurers), speaking evil in the ears of Hashem; and when Hashem heard it, His anger was kindled; and the fire of Hashem burnt among them and devoured in the uttermost part of the camp." (Bamidbar 11:1). The Ribono shel Olam became very angry. Moshe Rabbeinu had to pray to Him, and the fire was extinguished. What exactly is the meaning of the word "mis'onenim"? The Ramban quotes the Ibn Ezra that it comes from the word aven (sin), meaning that the people said "sinful things." The Ramban disagrees with the Ibn Ezra because the Torah did not mention any "sinful things" that the people spoke, and the Torah is usually not shy about mentioning what aveira is being punished when there is a Divine punishment.

The Ramban suggests that when the people distanced themselves from Har Sinai and moved deeper into the vast and awesome desert, they panicked and did not know what to do. "How are we going to survive in this desert? What are we going to eat and drink? How will we manage through all the depravation and suffering that exists in this barren stretch of land? How are we ever going to get out of this place?" According to the Ramban, the etymology of the word "mis'onenim" is the same as the expression "Mah yis'onen adam chai" (Of what shall a living man complain) (Eicha 3:39), which connotes pain and complaint about a person's situation. A mis'onen is a person who is feeling sorry for himself. "Woe is me that I have such tzores."

The Ramban explains that the Torah is thus teaching us what they did wrong: They acted like the worst thing had just happened to them. The Torah uses a simile here "like mis'onenim." They were not people in desperate straits, but they acted LIKE such people! This upset the Ribono shel Olam, who felt that they should be following Him in joy and rejoicing by virtue of all the positive things they had experienced: Yetzias Mitzrayim (The Exodus from Egypt), Krias Yam Yuf (the splitting of the Red Sea), Kabbalas HaTorah (receiving the Torah), as well as being provided with the mann and the be'er (well)! How dare they complain after all that?

Hashem said that someone who has it so good and nonetheless complains as if he has it so bad is guilty of a terrible aveira. That aveira is the inability to be 'makir tova' (recognize favors), failing to appreciate the positive. The Ribono shel Olam cannot tolerate ingratitude and therefore punishment immediately followed.

The Brisker Rav, zt"l, once said that if a person has a bad character trait (such as being haughty, or having a bad temper), we judge him as an imperfect human being (not an 'adam shalem'), a person who has a fault – perhaps even a bad fault. However, if a person is not makir tova, the Brisker Rav said that he is not merely not an 'adam shalem,' but rather, he is not an adam at all. He lacks the most basic component of humanity! We all have our challenges with certain ideal character traits. We need to work on them. But someone who is an ingrate is not a mensch at all!

The truth of the matter is that the Ramban alludes to this in Parshas Ha'Azinu. The pasuk there says, "Is it to Hashem that you do this, O' vile and unwise people?" (Devorim 32:6) The Ramban writes that Moshe Rabbeinu is chastising the people: "This is how you treat the Ribono shel Olam after all that he did for you?" What does Moshe Rabbeinu call them? Am naval. The Ramban notes that when an animal dies, it is called a neveilah, indicating it is no longer an animal, but rather it is a dead carcass. So too, a person who is not makir tova is a naval, because he ceases to be a human being. He is no longer a mensch.

That is the meaning of "Vayehi ha'am k'mis'onenim".

In truth, this is not the only example of ingratitude in Parshas BeHa'aloscha. There is a second incident as well:

"And the mixed multitude that was among them felt a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept on their part, and said: 'Would that we were given flesh to eat! We remember the fish, which we used to eat in Mitzrayim for free; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic; but now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all; we have only this mann to look to." (Bamidbar 11:4-6) The next pasuk, after those three pesukim is "Now the mann was like coriander seed and the appearance thereof was like the (white and sparkling) appearance of bdellium" (Bamidbar 11:7). The Jews are complaining about their lack of onions and garlic and then suddenly, the Torah makes an editorial comment. What is that all about? Rashi clarifies: In the first three pesukim, Bnei Yisrael were talking. Pasuk 7 is Hashem talking! They are complaining that all they have is mann and then Hashem inserts into the Torah the divine character of the mann, as if to say, "Let the world come and see about what My Children are complaining. The mann is so so special!" If you can complain about mann, you can complain about anything!

I once heard a schmooze from Rav Pam, zt"l (subsequently printed in his sefer), in which he says that he often hears such a bas kol (heavenly Voice) proclaiming "Look at what my children are complaining about!" When a young man comes and complains to him that he comes home from yeshiva or from work and finds the house strewn with toys all over the place, he complains to his wife, "Why can't you keep a neat house?" Rav Pam says

that when he hears such complaints, he hears the bas kol: "Look at what my children are complaining about?" How many infertile couples are there who would give their right arms to have a house full of strewn toys lying around! And these fellows are complaining that the house isn't neat!

He goes through several examples in his sefer: A child comes home from school at 5:30. Supper is ready on the table. The mother prepares meatloaf and a plate of vegetables, the child comes home to a set table and a hot meal and he complains. "I hate meatloaf!" Look at what my children complain about!

The following very instructive Medrash is not located in Parshas BeHa'aloscha, but I feel it is appropriate to share at this time. The Medrash is in Sefer Shemos (Parsha 4): When Hashem told Moshe that it was time to take the Jews out of Mitzraim, Moshe responded, "Master of the Universe, I am not able to take on this job. I need to ask permission from my father-in-law, Yisro. If he will not give me permission, I guess You will need to get another man."

The baalei mussar make two very interesting comments on this Medrash: It is our assumption that it is only necessary to show hakaras hatov to someone who is doing something positive for you out of the goodness of his heart. But if a person is doing something because it is his job or it is for his or her own personal reasons, then he or she does not deserve my hakaras hatov. They are just doing what they need to do or what they really want to do anyhow! The baalei mussar infer just the opposite from this Medrash:

Consider: Who owed whom? Moshe did not owe Yisro. Yisro owed Moshe. First of all, Moshe saved Yisro's daughters (Shemos 2:17). But moreover, Yisro could not get a shidduch for his daughters for all the money in the world because he was a pariah. He was ostracized by his community. He had been an idolatrous priest and suddenly, he adopted Judaism! Who wants to marry into his family? Moshe Rabbeinu did Yisro a great favor by marrying his daughter. Nonetheless, Moshe Rabbeinu did not say, "He owes me. I do not owe him." The lesson is that it does not make a difference. If someone has benefited from someone else, he must show gratitude no matter why the other fellow did what he did.

I saw the following incredible story in a sefer:

A Jewish fellow in New York was going to work by subway. He was standing by the side of the tracks and suddenly, he fell onto the tracks and could not get up. Everyone was paralyzed after having witnessed what just happened. An African-American man standing on the platform with everyone else jumped onto the tracks, pulled the fellow up, and saved him, shortly before the next train came riding right over the tracks where this fellow had fallen. The news crews of the New York papers tracked down this fellow and told him, "You are a hero!" He responded "I am not a hero. I did not do this to be a hero. I have a job. I am a dishwasher in a restaurant earning ten dollars an hour. I knew what would happen if this fellow had been run-over. The train would have been delayed for two hours. I would lose twenty dollars off my salary. I did not jump down onto to the tracks to save him. I jumped down there to pull him off the tracks so that the train would not be delayed and I could get to my job on time."

This is not the end of the story. This Jew who had fallen onto the tracks made a neder (vow) while lying on the tracks: "If someone will save me, I will give him $100,000." He now read the newspaper account where he learned that his savior did not do what he did to save him, but in order to not lose the $20 from his job! He sent the shaylah to Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein: Does he need to give the $100,000 or not?

Rav Zilberstein paskened that he needed to give 1/3 of that amount. (I am not certain about the logic Rav Zilberstein used to come up with this specific figure.) Rav Zilberstein, however, then took the shaylah to his brother-in-law, Rav Chaim Kanievsky to see if he agreed with his psak. Rav Chaim told him: The fellow needs to give the entire $100,000! Rav Chaim ruled that it does not matter why the fellow did what he did. He could have done it to become a hero or he could have done it to save $20. The reason he did it is not relevant. He saved this Jew's life. The Jew said that if someone will save his life, he will give him $100,000. The Jew has to keep his neder.

Hakaras hatov does not depend on why the person does it. Hakaras hatov is an obligation regardless of the motive. A person must be a mensch. As the Brisker Rav said, a person who does not appreciate, iz nit kin mensch (is not a person).

Over the years, I have read dozens, scores, and perhaps hundreds of stories about how great people were makir tova over things that we might take totally for granted, perhaps not even considering them favors at all. And yet, great people consider these things favors and remember them forever. The understanding of this is simple: Someone who is not a makir tova is not a mensch, and the bigger the mensch, the bigger makir tova a person is. The two go hand in hand. People who are literally gedolim, know what it is to be a makir tova.

I once mentioned the story of a bochur in Yeshiva Torah Voda'as who was not coming to minyan. No matter what they tried to do, they could not get him out of bed. The dormitory supervisor came to Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, who was the Rosh Yeshiva at the time, and requested to throw this fellow out of the dormitory for not coming to minyan. Rav Yaakov said, "Yes. If his not coming to minyan affects other people, you can throw him out of the dormitory." But first, Rav Yaakov said, send him in to see me. I want to speak with him.

The head of the dorm told the fellow, "You are being kicked out of the dormitory and Rav Yaakov wants to see you." The fellow was literally shaking in his boots. Rav Yaakov said to him, "I understand that you need to leave the dormitory because you do not come to minyan, but tell me, where are you going to sleep from now on?" The boy said, "I don't know. I have no back-up plan." Rav Yaakov said, "You will come to my house. You will sleep by me." (This is what we call an 'upgrade.')

The boy was astonished: "The Rosh Yeshiva said that I am being thrown out of the dormitory and now he is telling me that I am going from the dormitory to the Rosh Yeshiva's house?"

Rav Yaakov explained, "Yes. It is because I learned in the Kovno Kollel when I was a young man in Lithuania. Your grandfather used to give money to the Kovno Kollel. Therefore, I feel I owe you a debt of gratitude and so therefore, if you don't have a place to sleep, you can sleep by me." This grandfather was not the sole supporter of the Kovno Kollel, but he was on their contributor's list.

This is just an example of the maxim: The bigger the mensch, the bigger the makir tova and the lesser the mensch, the lesser the makir tova.

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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

Two Types of Leadership

BEHA'ALOTECHA

In this week's parsha, Moses has a breakdown. It is the lowest emotional ebb of his entire career as a leader. Listen to his words to God:

"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 find any found favour in Your sight, and let me not see my own misery."

Num. 11:11-15

The cause of his distress seems utterly disproportionate to its effect. The people have done what they so often did before. They have complained. They say:

"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! But now our throats are dry. There is nothing at all but this manna to look at."

Num. 11:5-6

Many times Moses has faced this kind of complaint from the people before. There are several such instances in the book of Exodus, including one almost exactly similar:

"If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate our fill of bread. Instead you have brought us out into this desert to starve the entire assembly to death."

Ex. 16:3

On these earlier occasions Moses did not give expression to the kind of despair he speaks of here. Usually, when leaders face repeated challenges, they grow stronger each time. They learn how to respond, how to cope. They develop resilience, a thick skin. They formulate survival strategies. Why then does Moses seem to do the opposite, not only here but often throughout the book of Numbers?

In the chapters that follow, Moses seems to lack the unshakeable determination he had in Exodus. At times, as in the episode of the spies, he seems surprisingly passive, leaving it to others to fight the battle. At others, he seems to lose control and becomes angry, something a leader should not do. Something has changed, but what? Why the breakdown, the burnout, the despair?

A fascinating insight is provided by the innovative work of Prof. Ronald Heifetz, co-founder and director of the Center for Public Leadership at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.[1]

Heifetz distinguishes between technical challenges and adaptive challenges. A technical challenge is one where you have a problem and someone else has the solution. You are ill, you go to the doctor, he diagnoses your condition and prescribes a pill. All you have to do is follow the instructions.

Adaptive challenges are different. They arise when we are part of the problem. You are ill, you go to the doctor, and he tells you: I can give you a pill, but the truth is that you are going to have to change your lifestyle. You are overweight, out of condition, you sleep too little and are exposed to too much stress. Pills won't help you until you change the way you live.

Adaptive leadership is called for when the world is changing, circumstances are no longer what they were, and what once worked works no more. There is no quick fix for such things, no miracle pill, no simple following of instructions. We have to change. What's more, the leader cannot do this for us. He must inspire, but we have to follow through.

The fundamental difference between the books of Exodus and Numbers is that in Exodus, Moses is called on to exercise technical leadership. The Israelites are enslaved? God sends signs and wonders, ten plagues, and the Israelites go free. They need to escape from Pharaoh's chariots? Moses lifts his staff and God divides the sea. They are hungry? God sends manna from heaven. Thirsty? God sends water from a rock. When they have a problem, the leader, Moses, together with God, provides the solution. The people do not have to exert themselves at all.

In the book of Numbers, however, the equation has changed. The Israelites have completed the first part of their journey. They have left Egypt, reached Sinai, and made a covenant with God. Now they are on their way to the Promised Land. Moses' role is now different. Instead of providing technical leadership, he has to provide adaptive leadership. He has to get the people to change, to exercise responsibility, to learn to do things for themselves while trusting in God, instead of relying on God to do things for them.

It is precisely because Moses understands this that he is so devastated when he sees that the people haven't changed at all. They are still complaining about the food, almost exactly as they did before the revelation at Mount Sinai, before their covenant with God, before they themselves had built the Sanctuary, their first creative endeavour together.

He has to teach them to adapt, but he senses – rightly as it transpires – that they are simply unable to change their pattern of response, the result of years of slavery. They are passive, and overly dependent. They have lost the capacity for self-motivated action. As we eventually discover, it will take a new generation, born in freedom, to develop the strengths needed for self-governance, which is the precondition of freedom.

Adaptive leadership is intensely difficult. People resist change. They erect barriers against it. One is denial. A second is anger. A third is blame. That is why adaptive leadership is emotionally draining in the extreme. Many of the great adaptive leaders – among them Lincoln, Gandhi, John F. and Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr, Anwar Sadat and Yitzhak Rabin – were assassinated. Their greatness was posthumous. Only in retrospect were they seen by their own people as heroes. At the time, they were seen by many as a threat to the status quo, to all that is comfortingly familiar.

Moses, with the insight of the greatest of the Prophets, intuitively sees all this. Hence his despair and his wish to die. It is far easier to be a technical leader than an adaptive one. It is easy to leave it to God, hard to realise that God is calling us to responsibility, to become His partners in the work of redemption.

Of course, the Torah does not leave it there. In Judaism, despair never has the last word. God comforts Moses, tells him to recruit seventy elders to share the burden of leadership with him, and gives him the strength to carry on. Adaptive leadership is, for Judaism, the highest form of leadership. That is what the Prophets did. Without relieving the people of their responsibility, they gave them a vision and a hope. They spoke difficult, challenging truths, and they did so with a passion that still has the power to inspire the better angels of our nature.

But with devastating honesty – never more so than in its account of Moses' temporary breakdown – the Torah tells us that adaptive leadership is not easy, and that those who exercise it will face anger and criticism. They may come to feel that they have failed. But they have not. Moses remains the greatest leader the Jewish people has ever known, the man who almost single-handedly shaped the Israelites into a nation that never gave up or gave way to despair.

Nowhere is the difficulty of adaptive leadership more simply summarised than in God's words to Moses successor, Joshua.

Be strong and courageous, for you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them. But you must be strong and very courageous indeed to faithfully uphold all the Torah that Moses My servant commanded you . . .

Joshua 1:6-7

The first sentence speaks about military leadership. Joshua was to lead the people in their conquest of the land. The second verse speaks about spiritual leadership. Joshua was to ensure that he and the people kept faith with the covenant they had made with God. The first, says the verse, demands courage, but the second demands exceptional courage. Change always does. To fight an enemy is hard, to fight with yourself harder still. To help people find the strength to change: that is the highest leadership challenge of all.

[1] Ronald Heifetz, Leadership Without Easy Answers, Harvard University Press; Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, Leadership on the Line, Harvard Business Press; Ronald Heifetz, Marty Linsky and Alexander Glashow, The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World, Harvard Business Press.

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from: Rabbi Kaganoff ymkaganoff@gmail.com to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com, Rabbi Kaganoff's Sunday night shiur <rabbi-kaganoffs-sunday-night-shiur@googlegroups.com>
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Rav Yehudah Hachassid and His Shidduchin II

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

In a previous article (now posted on the website RabbiKaganoff.com under the title Rav Yehudah Hachassid and His Shidduchin), we discussed the writings of Rav Yehudah Hachassid, who prohibited or advised against many potential marriages that are otherwise perfectly acceptable according to halachah. But first some background on the chassidei Ashkenaz.

Who was Rav Shmuel Hachassid?

Rav Yehudah Hachassid's father, known as Rav Shmuel Hachassid, was a very righteous individual who was a great mekubal, one of the baalei Tosafos, and a highly respected leader of twelfth-century Ashkenazic Jewry. Because of his great levels of righteousness, Rav Shmuel Hachassid was also sometimes called Rav Shmuel Hakadosh or Rav Shmuel Hanavi.

Rav Shmuel Hachassid was born in Speyer, one of the bastions of Torah that then existed on the banks of the Rhine River. (People whose family name is Shapiro and its various pronunciations and spellings are probably descended from someone who lived in Speyer; you might be progeny of either Rav Shmuel or Rav Yehudah Hachassid.) Rav Shmuel was the rabbinic leader of the community in Speyer and the head of a yeshivah. He was also the repository of much kabbalistic knowledge, both oral and written, that had been handed down from the generations of great Ashkenazic leaders before him, including many great baalei kabbalah. He became the recognized leader of a scholarly movement whose members were called the Chassidei Ashkenaz, individuals who lived their lives in an other-worldly existence, devoted exclusively to Torah and growth in yiras shamayim. The lengthy Shir Hayichud, recited in many congregations in its entirety after davening on Kol Nidrei evening, is attributed to Rav Shmuel Hachassid.

One of Rav Shmuel's sons was Rav Yehudah Hachassid, who was born in approximately 4910 (1150). Rav Yehudah Hachassid is also one of the baalei Tosafos, and is quoted several times in the Tosafos printed in the margins of our Gemara (for example, Tosafos, Bava Metzia 5b, s.v. Dechashid; Kesuvos 18b, s.v. Uvekulei). Rav Yehudah Hachassid's students included a number of famous rishonim who are themselves baalei Tosafos, such as Rav Yitzchok Or Zarua, Rav Elazar ben Rav Yehudah (the Rokeach), Rav Moshe of Coucy (the Semag), and Rav Baruch ben Rav Yitzchok (the Sefer Haterumah).

Rav Yehudah Hachassid also continued his father's role as the head of the Chassidei Ashkenaz. He followed what we would consider an ascetic relationship to this world. For example, he fasted all day the entire week, eating only in the evenings. His disciple, the Or Zarua, records that Rav Yehudah Hachassid fasted two days Yom Kippur (Hilchos Yom Kippur, end of #281).

Rav Yehudah Hachassid also authored works on kabbalah and is commonly attributed as the author of the poem Anim Zemiros, sung in many shullen at the end of Shabbos davening. He was also the source of works that can be easily read by the layman, two of which, the Sefer Chassidim and the Tzava'as [the ethical will of] Rav Yehudah Hachassid, are the subjects of today's article. The Sefer Chassidim includes halacha, minhag, mussar, and commentary on tefillah. This work is mentioned numerous times by the later halachic authorities, as are many of the instructions in his tzava'ah. As we will soon discuss, there is some question as to whether he actually wrote the tzava'ah or whether he transmitted its content orally and it was recorded by his children or disciples.[DB1] Rav Yehudah Hachassid graduated to olam haba on Taanis Esther, 4977 (1217), in Regensburg, Germany.

The tzava'ah of Rav Yehudah Hachassid

In his ethical will, Rav Yehudah Hachassid prohibits and/or advises against a vast array of practices for which he is the earliest, and sometimes the only, halachic source. Why did Rav Yehudah Hachassid prohibit these actions? Although we are not certain, because he offered no explanation, many later authorities assume that, in most instances, these were practices that Rav Yehudah Hachassid realized are dangerous because of kabbalistic reasons. Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi (the first Lubavitcher Rebbe, author of Shulchan Aruch Harav and Tanya) is quoted as having said that to understand one of Rav Yehudah Hachassid's statements in his tzava'ah would require a work the size of the Shelah, a classic of halachah, kabbalah and musar that is hundreds of pages long.

Reasons for the injunctions

Although the considerations behind Rav Yehudah Hachassid's rulings have been lost to us, several Acharonim proposed various reasons for one of his rulings, that a chosson and his father-in-law or a kallah and her mother-in-law should not share the same given name:

1) Some Acharonim maintain that the prohibitions are in order to avoid ayin hara. Due to the novelty of having the same name as an in-law, people would be more apt to talk about such a shidduch and cause an ayin hara (Chida, Peirush Lesefer Chassidim #477; Heishiv Moshe #19; Pri Hasadeh, vol. I, #69).

2) Others contend that if the kallah has the same name as the chosson's mother, the chosson will be unable to fulfill the mitzvah of kibbud eim when his mother dies, since he will not be able to name a child after her (Maharil #17).

3) Another explanation is that it will cause a lack of respect towards the parents. If the chosson's name is the same as the kallah's father, she will inevitably use her husband's name in her father's presence (Even Haroshah #31).

The responsum of the Noda Biyehudah

In my earlier article, I mentioned the responsum of the Noda Biyehudah (Shu't Even Ha'ezer II #79), who explains that the shidduchin that Rav Yehudah Hachassid discouraged are concerns only for his descendants. The Noda Biyehudah also holds that Rav Yehudah Hachassid's concerns apply only to birth names or names given to sons at their bris, but do not apply to any name changes that take place afterwards. And most importantly, the Noda Biyehudah feels that it is more important to marry off one's daughter to a talmid chacham than to be concerned about names.

Double whammy

The Chasam Sofer (Shu't Even Ha'ezer, end of #116) was asked by Rav Shmuel, the av beis din of Balkan, concerning a highly scholarly and qualified bachur whose first name was the same as the father of the girl that was suggested, and whose mother carried the same name as the girl. The Chasam Sofer permitted this shidduch, providing two reasons not cited by the Noda Biyehudah:

The Gemara (Pesachim 110b) explains that sheidim, evil spirits, are concerned only about people who are afraid of them, but that someone not troubled by them will suffer no harm. The Chasam Sofer reasons that the prohibitions of Rav Yehudah Hachassid apply only to people who are concerned about them.

Other authorities accept this conclusion of the Chasam Sofer. For example, after providing an extensive discussion on all the rules of Rav Yehudah Hachassid, the Sedei Chemed (Volume 7, page 20) notes that when he assumed his position as the rav of the Crimea, he discovered that the local populace did not observe any of the rules of Rav Yehudah Hachassid. The Sedei Chemed, who himself was concerned about all of these rules, writes that he thought about mentioning these matters to his community. He subsequently decided against it, reasoning that no harm will come to someone who is not apprehensive.

Following this same approach, Rav Moshe Feinstein rules that such a shidduch should be prevented only if the couple getting married is concerned that one of them shares a name with his or her future parent-in-law. However, if the marrying couple is not disturbed about violating the rules of Rav Yehudah Hachassid, even if the parents are concerned, one may proceed with the marriage, -- the concern of a parent will not bring harm upon the couple (Shu't Igros Moshe, Even Ha'ezer 1:4). Similarly, I found a different authority who rules that when the couple makes the shidduch themselves, there is no concern for the rules of Rav Yehudah Hachassid (Sedei Chemed Volume 7, page 21, quoting Heishiv Moshe).

It is reported that someone asked the Chazon Ish regarding a shidduch where the prospective kallah had the same name as the mother of the suggested young man. The Chazon Ish asked the prospective chosson whether he was apprehensive about this. When he responded that he was not at all concerned, the Chazon Ish told him that he could proceed (Pe'er Hador, vol. IV, pg. 90). It is interesting to note that, in another instance, someone asked the Chazon Ish about a situation where the prospective chosson had the same name as the prospective kallah's father. The Chazon Ish ruled that as long as they do not live in the same city, they could go through with the shidduch. He explained that the whole reason beyond these rulings of Rav Yehuda Hachassid is ayin hara – people should not say "Here are the two Yankels." However, if they live in different cities, people will not talk about them (Ma'aseh Ish pg. 215).

Others, however, view Rav Yehudah Hachassid's prohibition differently. For example, some question whether a man whose mother is deceased may marry a woman who has the same name as his late mother. It would seem that, according to most of the reasons mentioned above, one may proceed with this shidduch. Nevertheless, some authorities are opposed, which

indicates that they do not accept the reasons cited above (Kaf Hachayim, Yoreh Deah 116:127).

Two versions

Returning to the responsum of the Chasam Sofer, he mentions another reason to be lenient, which requires some explanation. Regarding the concern that a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, or a son-in-law and father-in-law not share the same name, we find that the two sources attributed to Rav Yehudah Hachassid, the Sefer Chassidim and the tzava'ah, quote different versions of the prohibition. Whereas the tzava'ah states that a man should not marry a woman whose father shares his name, and a woman should not marry a man whose mother shares her given name, the text in the Sefer Chassidim (Chapter 477) states that if a man married a woman named Rivkah whose son also married a woman named Rivkah, then the grandson (the son's son) should not marry a girl named Rivkah. The version quoted in Sefer Chassidim seems unconcerned about a man marrying a woman who shares his mother's name or about a woman marrying a man with her father's name. The Chasam Sofer concludes that the tzava'ah of Rav Yehudah Hachassid should also be understood this way.

Similar to the comment of the Chasam Sofer, the Chachmas Odom (123:13) notes that Rav Yehudah Hachassid clearly meant the same in both places, and that the Sefer Chassidim is written more accurately. Therefore, these two great authorities rule that even Rav Yehudah Hachassid was never concerned about a woman marrying someone whose mother shares her name, or a man marrying a woman whose father shares his.

Other lenient reasons

Although these three authorities -- the Noda Biyehudah, the Chasam Sofer and the Chachmas Odom -- are basically not concerned with the commonly understood application of Rav Yehudah Hachassid's tzava'ah, other authorities are concerned, but provide additional reasons and applications when the concerns of Rav Yehudah Hachassid do not apply. Some mention that one need not be concerned where the two parties spell their names differently, even when they pronounce the name the same way (quoted in Sedei Chemed, Volume 7, page 17). However, the Sedei Chemed (Volume 7, page 20) concludes that the spelling should make no difference: either way, one should be concerned.

Variances of the name

The Kaf Hachayim (Yoreh Deah 116:12) mentions a dispute whether there is a concern when the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law have somewhat different names. For example, may a woman named Rivkah Rachel marry a man whose mother's name is Rachel, since their names are not identical? Some feel that this is relevant when the woman now being considered for the shidduch is called Rivkah, but does not provide any basis for lenience if, indeed, she uses Rachel regularly as part of her name. According to this opinion, if she chooses to add another name to avoid the concern of Rav Yehudah Hachassid, she should be called only by the new name (Kaf Hachayim, Yoreh Deah 116:126).

Similarly, some rule that if the son-in-law is known by two different names, some people calling him by one name and others by a different name, there is no concern if the potential father-in-law has one of these names (see Sedei Chemed Volume 7, pages 17).

On the other hand, Rav Moshe Feinstein rules there is concern only if the full given names of both the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law (or the father-in-law and son-in-law) are identical. Prevalent practice follows this approach. An example is that my rosh yeshivah Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman, was not concerned that his daughter marry Rav Shmuel Yaakov Weinberg, notwithstanding that both father-in-law and son-in-law used the named Yaakov alone as their primary name.

Different English names

Rav Moshe Feinstein rules that if the father-in-law and son-in-law (or mother-in-law and daughter-in-law) have different English names, there is no concern, even if they share identical Hebrew names.

Changing the name

Some earlier authorities suggest that the chosson or the kallah change their name or add to it. For example, when someone asked the Chasam Sofer about having his daughter marry someone who shares his name, he advised them to have the chosson change his name (Pischei Teshuvah, Even Ha'ezer 2:7, in the name of the Kerem Shlomo).

Rav Moshe Feinstein accepted this approach of the Chasam Sofer in theory. However, in a responsum on the topic, he wrote not to rely on changing the name since, at the time and place that he wrote his teshuvah, people would continue to use the original name. A name change means that the person is now called by the new name.

Stricter approaches

As mentioned, there are, other authorities who are highly concerned about violating the instructions of Rav Yehudah Hachassid, and challenge or ignore the above heterim (quoted in Sedei Chemed Volume 7, pages 17 ff. ; Kaf Hachayim, Yoreh Deah 116:125).

In conclusion

I leave it to the individual to discuss with his or her posek whether or not to pursue a particular shidduch because of an identical name or a different concern raised by Rav Yehudah Hachassid. Of course, we all realize that the most important factor is davening, asking Hashem to provide the appropriate shidduchin the right time.

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fw from allen.klein@gmail.com

from: Torah in Action /Shema Yisrael <parsha@torahinaction.com>

subject: Peninim on the Torah by

Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Peninim on the Torah

Aharon did so… as Hashem had commanded Moshe. (8:3)

Rashi writes: L'hagid shevacho shel Aharon – she'lo shinah, "To tell the praise of Aharon, in that he did not deviate." This statement begs elucidation. Would it enter anyone's imagination to suggest that Aharon might have deviated from Hashem's command? A number of expositions explain Rashi's statement. The Sifrei Chassidus have a twist on the definition of the word shinah, deviate. When we take into consideration that Aharon would prepare and light the Menorah twice daily, it might be appropriate to say that he never tired of his function. The same passion and love that he manifested in the morning, he repeated in the afternoon. This went on day in and day out. The "umpteenth" time was no different than the first time that he lit the Menorah. Thus, lo shinah is derived from shoneh, review, repeat, redundant. Every time Aharon stepped forward to light the candles was a new opportunity – not a repeat performance.

In his hesped, eulogy, for Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, the Satmar Rav, zl, offered his explanation of Rashi's comment. It is true that, for ordinary people, to follow the command to the letter of the law is acceptable. It is with regard to someone who is at the apex of spirituality, one who had an acute understanding of the mitzvah, its esoteric secrets, whose devotion to seeing the institution of the mesorah achieve even greater spiritual influence, that she'lo shinah plays a more crucial role. He has every reason to enhance the mitzvah. Aharon HaKohen had every reason to innovate the service ever so slightly. He might have been able to reach one whose affiliation had been, at best, modest. Aharon, however, understood that, regardless of his own understanding of the situation, Hashem had a deeper, more penetrating perspective. Thus, one does not deviate from the Divine decree. The Satmar Rav explained that Rav Aharon could have instituted changes that would make Torah more acceptable to those on the fringe. He did not, because one follows the mesorah, tradition, as indicated by Hashem. His spiritual integrity guaranteed that the Torah taught in yeshivos has remained pristine and pure.

Furthermore, mesorah, the tradition, must be transmitted from one generation to the next via a rebbe to a talmid. One does not just pick it up on his own. The

Torah was given to Moshe Rabbeinu, who, in turn, gave it to Yehoshua, who was the vehicle that passed it along to the next generation – and the next. The Haflaah (Panim Yafos Parashas Vayechi 48:15) writes: It is impossible for one on his own, without the help of a rebbe, to perceive (and have somewhat

of an understanding) of the Creator. One who did not learn from a rebbe is missing a vital component of the process perceiving Hashem.

Horav Moshe Shapiro, zl, taught that one can take a Shas (set of Talmud) with him to a far-off island and sit and learn day and night without interruption, to the point that he becomes an outstanding Torah scholar. Nonetheless, his entire demeanor and way of life are not much different than that of a gentile! Why? He did not learn from a rebbe. Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, would say: "We do nothing significant for which we did not receive guidance from our Rebbeim."

ויהי אנשים אשר היו טמאים לנפש אדם ולא יכלו לעשות הפסח... ויאמרו... אנחנו טמאים... למה נגרע לבלתי הקריב את קרבן ד' במעדו

There were men who had been contaminated by a human corpse and could not make the Pesach-offering… they said, "We are contaminated… why should we be diminished by not offering Hashem's offering in its appointed time?" (9:6,7)

A debate in the Talmud (Succah 25a) concerns the identity of the men who were contaminated. Rabbi Yosi HaGlili says that they were the pallbearers of Yosef's coffin. Rabbi Akiva says they were Mishael and Elitzafan, who were occupied with the corpses of Nadav and Avihu. In any event, these were not ordinary Jews who wanted to display their religious commitment. These were men who were sincerely concerned about being left out as the nation celebrated the offering of the Korban Pesach. We wonder what these men were thinking. They were fully aware of their situation: they were tamei – end of story. One who is tamei may not offer the Korban Pesach. Did they expect Moshe Rabbeinu to revise the Torah? Furthermore, is there really a controversy (other than historical) as to who were these men – to the point that Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yosi HaGlili debate their identity?

Horav Shmuel Aharon Yudelevitz, zl (Meil Shmuel) explains that even Chazal wondered why they were making this request. Certainly, they did not expect Moshe to bring down another Torah from Heaven. These men, however, felt that it was inconceivable (to them) that Hashem would prevent them from offering the Korban Pesach. They understood that the way things stood, there was no logical way for them to offer the Korban Pesach. Nonetheless, they were certain that Hashem would somehow provide a suitable option. Thus, they presented their request to Moshe.

When Moshe saw and understood the sincerity that motivated their request, he did not ignore them, for, he too, felt that, if there is a will – there is a way – and they had an extremely strong will. Moshe turned to Hashem to rule on this issue. The answer came back in the form of Pesach Sheni, a second chance to observe the offering of the Korban Pesach. It was unheard of, but this is the power of ratzon, strong will.

As a result of this thought, Rav Shmuel Aharon explains the debate between Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yosi HaGlili. Chazal sought to trace the roots of these men who, despite being tamei, demanded a venue to offer the Korban Pesach. Rabbi Yosi HaGlili felt that, by carrying Yosef HaTzaddik's coffin, they had become inspired to reach higher, to seek the highest levels of sanctified living. They derived from Yosef that lo b'moso yikach ha'kol, one takes nothing (from this world) with him when he dies. Yosef had enormous wealth and unprecedented power, but, at the end, when his tenure in this world came to its conclusion, he lay in a coffin like everyone else. (As the old Yiddish saying goes, "There are no keshenes, pockets, in the tachrichim, shrouds.) We take nothing material on our journey to the World of Truth.

Furthermore, Yosef never bore a grudge against his brothers for the misery they caused him. He understood that this was Hashem's decree. Last, they saw the great merit that Yosef had because he had run away from Potifar's wife. The Red Sea split when his coffin came toward it. Ya'nus mipnei ba'nas; "Run from before the one who ran (away from Potifar's wife)." When they realized the immense distinction of whose body they carried, they decided that they too wanted to make use of every opportunity for spiritual growth.

Rabbi Akiva feels that Mishael and Elitzafan, who involved themselves in caring for the bodies of Nadav and Avihu, were privy to an even greater spiritual lesson. Nadav and Avihu died during their attempt to fulfill Hashem's command on the highest level. The mere fact that Moshe Rabbeinu chose these two to take care of the bodies indicates that they were close with the deceased. Thus, Rabbi Akiva feels that the men who were impure were two individuals who had learned the importance of going to the extreme to fulfill a mitzvah. They could not live with themselves if they were to be deprived of the mitzvah of Korban Pesach.

One thing is for certain: Whether it was Yosef's pallbearers or it was Mishael and Elitzafan – they both strove for perfection in avodas Hashem. They did not settle. They wanted more; they wanted it all! As a result, Chazal established Pesach Sheini.

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from: Rabbi YY Jacobson <rabbiyy-theyeshiva.net@shared1.ccsend.com>
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Rabbi YY Jacobson

Why Are People Afraid of the Truth?

The Anxiety Inside of You is Testimony to Your Search for Authenticity

By: Rabbi YY Jacobson

Why Are People Afraid of the Truth?
The Anxiety Inside of You is Testimony to Your Search for Authenticity

The Lie

The joker in town approached a little wise Jewish boy, Hersheleh, and says: I will give you a ruble if you tell me a lie right here on the spot!

To which Hersheleh responds: You said you would give me two!

High Five

In this week's portion, the Torah describes the ceremony by which the Levites were formally consecrated for service in the Sanctuary. G-d describes the selection process as follows:

יט. וְאֶתְּנָה אֶת הַלְוִיִּם נְתֻנִים לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲבֹד אֶת עֲבֹדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וּלְכַפֵּר עַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יִהְיֶה בִּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגֶף בְּגֶשֶׁת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ:

I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel, to perform the service for the children of Israel in the Tent of Meeting, and to atone on behalf of the children of Israel, so that the children of Israel will not be inflicted with plague, when the children of Israel approach the Sanctuary.

Do you notice what is peculiar and awkward about this verse? In one paragraph, defying all laws of syntax, grammar, diction, and proper writing, the Torah employs the term "Children of Israel" FIVE times. Instead of using the term once and then writing "they," it repeats this title five times.

Rashi presents a lovely interpretation, one that has inspired our people for centuries:

ואתנה וגו': חמשה פעמים נאמר בני ישראל במקרא זה, להודיע חבתן שנכפלו אזכרותיהן במקרא אחד כמנין חמשה חומשי תורה, וכך ראיתי בבראשית רבה:

"The children of Israel" is mentioned five times in this verse, thus declaring the affection [G-d has] for them, for their mention is repeated in one verse as many times as the five books of the Torah."

The use of the phrase "high five"—the high five is a celebratory hand gesture that occurs when two people simultaneously raise one hand, about head high, and push, slide or slap the flat of their palm against the palm of their partner—as a noun has been part of the Oxford English Dictionary since 1980 and as a verb since 1981. Yet even "high five" originates in Torah. Where? Right here in this verse, the Torah gives a "high five" to the Children of Israel, repeating their name five times in one verse, comparing them to the five books of Moses.

But there are two questions: 1) Why suddenly here? Why, in the middle of the book of Numbers, while discussing the service of the Levites in the Sanctuary, does G-d "remind" us that he loves His people? 2) The significance of mentioning them five times, Rashi explains, is to compare them to the five books of the Torah. But of what significance is it that G-d repeats the term "Benei Yisrael" the same number of times as the number of the Torah books? What is the message being conveyed behind this particular praise?

Love of Truth

The Chidushei HaRim (Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Altar of Gur) presents a beautiful answer:

Let us take a closer look at what is happening at this point in Israel's history. One group of people, the tribe is Levi, has been singled out for a unique vocation: to perform the Divine service in the sanctuary. Now, this position belonged previously to the firstborn of each family (the "bechorim"), as discussed at length in the portion of Bamidbar. Now it was taken from them and given to the Levites. After the sin of the Golden Calf, when the only tribe abstaining and fighting for the truth was Levi, the spiritual service was taken from the firstborn and given to the Levites.

The Gift of Leadership

Now, the Talmud makes an incredible observation:

מנחות קט, ב: תניא אמר ר' יהושע בן פרחיה בתחלה כל האומר עלה לה אני כופתו ונותנו לפני הארי עתה כל האומר לי לירד ממנה אני מטיל עליו קומקום של חמין שהרי שאול ברח ממנה וכשעלה בקש להרוג את דוד.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perachya said, "In the beginning, had someone told me go assume a position of leadership, I would have bound and set him in front of a lion. Now that I achieved a high position, anyone who would tell me to give it up and descend from it, I would pour a pitcher of hot water over him.

Consider the story of King Saul: First he fled from the position of royalty. But one he became king, he wishes to kill David out of fear that he will usurp his position.

This is a vital insight. Leadership elicits a deep chord in the human psyche; it triggers a "note," which the mystics called "Malchus," royalty. A certain fuse of the human soul is ignited you when you are elevated to a position of leadership. Leaving that behind is painful.

This is exactly what happens in this story: The Bechurim, the oldest members of each Jewish family, were in a position of spiritual leadership. Now, they were instructed to give it all up, transferring the mantle to the Levites.

No Mutiny

And yet, astoundingly, we find no mutiny, rebellion, not even a protest, or outcry. For a nation that did not stop bickering and protesting, for a nation that would produce a Korach who would protest the positions of Moses and Aaron, it is fascinating that the firstborn accepted this transfer with grace and peace of mind, and the entire people of Israel embraced it with serenity.

Why not? The answer consists of one word: Truth.

The firstborn and the Jews at large, realized the truth: The position belongs to the Levites, and it would be best performed by them. What mattered was not personal agendas, but truth. The Levites, as a tribe, professed a level of loyalty, dedication, commitment, and the courage to stand up for truth; they would do the job best.

It is this quality that G-d is praising, by mentioning the Jewish people five times in one verse, comparing them to the five books of the Torah. What is the core uniqueness of Torah? The answer is one words: Truth. "Asher nasan lanu Toras Emes," we recite in the blessing after the reading of the Torah. "He gave us a Torah of Truth." The key ingredient of Torah is Truth. It is interested in nothing else but truth. It speaks the truth, it demands the truth, and it asks of us to live up to truth.

Its truth—like all truth—is sometimes harsh. Torah spares no one. Even its own writer and greatest hero, Moses, is not spared by Torah. Adam, Abraham, Moses, and King David—everyone is depicted in Torah with full truth. Their heroism and shortcoming (of course relative to their sublime and lofty spiritual level), their positive actions, and their errors (again relative to their level), are all portrayed unflinchingly in the Torah.

The Torah will not bend the truth to make people feel good. It will show empathy, but it will never deceive you into thinking you are doing the right thing when you are destroying yourself because, in the long term, that will cause you far more pain. Empathy means that we appreciate the depth and truth of the struggle, but not that we deceive ourselves and others and bend reality to make us feel good for the moment.

And it is this truth that Torah demands of its students. One of the most inspiring components of Talmud study is noticing the intellectual integrity of the Talmudic sages. What matters in every discussion in the entire Talmud is one thing and one thing only: the truth. Sages may have maintained a position for decades, yet when they discovered their error, they retracted it because it was against the truth.

Retract

The Talmud relates this story:

פסחים כב: שמעון העמסוני, ואמרי לה נחמיה העמסוני, היה דורש כל אתין שבתורה, כיון שהגיע ל"את ה' אלהיך תירא" פירש. אמרו לו תלמידיו: רבי, כל אתין שדרשת מה תהא עליהם? אמר להם: כשם שקבלתי שכר על הדרישה, כך קבלתי על הפרישה. עד שבא רבי עקיבא ולימד: את ה' אלהיך תירא—לרבות תלמידי חכמים.

Shimon the Imsonite—others state, Nechemiah the Imsonite—used to interpret every 'eth' in the Torah, but when he came to the verse You shall fear [eth] the Lord your G-d, he retracted. His disciples said to him: "Master, what is to become of all the ethin you have interpreted?" He replied, "Just as I received reward for the exposition, so I will receive reward for the retraction." When Rabbi Akiva, however, came, he taught: "You shall fear eth the Lord your G-d" implies that the scholarly disciples are also to be feared.

Shimon the Amsonite said these words to his probably stunned disciples who just observed a life-long search go up in flames: "Just as I received reward for the exposition, so I will receive reward for the retraction." How majestic a response! I am not here to make a name for myself; I am here to search for truth. And if the truth proves me wrong, I am happy to communicate this as well. If the truth wins, I have won. I have been rewarded. To be defeated by truth is the only defeat that spells a victory.

Reb Chaim's Lecture

A story:

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (1903-1993) related an incident involving his grandfather, the famous Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik, known as Reb Chaim Brisker (1853-1918). When Reb Chaim Solovteichik started saying Torah discourses in the famed Lithuanian Volozhin Yeshiva, some young, brilliant but arrogant students complained that Reb Chaim was unworthy of teaching in that Yeshiva. Who is this Reb Chaim anyway? They believed that he only received the position because he married the granddaughter of the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, known as the Netziv.

The resolution of this "complaint" was that the yeshiva brought in three great Torah scholars to rule whether Rabbi Chaim was worthy to give lectures in Volozhin. (One of these great men was Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor, the famed Rabbi of the Lithuanian city of Kovne).

The students, some of them great minds, prepared for intellectual "war." They prepared themselves well on the subject he would discuss. They were determined to "bring him down."

Reb Chaim began a shiur on the subject of Aylonis (an adult woman without the signs of maturity in terms of her halachic status) in the Talmudic Tractate Yevomos and was in the middle of reconciling a difficult passage of Rambam in his Mishna Torah (Maimonides in his code of law.)

In the middle of the presentation, Reb Chaim remembered something. He recalled a statement from the Rambam's commentary to the Mishnah, in which the Rambam seemingly advanced a position that was inconsistent with the whole approach that Reb Chaim was trying to develop.

In front of the three sages, present to determine if he was fit for the prestigious job, Reb Chaim gave a bang on his lectern and said, "The shiur that I had prepared is false. My hypothesis was wrong, the Rambam says otherwise in his Mishnah Commentary." He left the lectern.

Some of the students attempted to show that his hypothesis was not wrong; that the contradiction can be reconciled. But Reb Chaim said: All your ideas are sharp answers, but not true answers. I have made a mistake. My lecture was built on a mistaken premise.

Reb Chaim sat down.

His enemies were thrilled. He was defeated. He admitted his own ineptness. Yet to their shock the three great rabbis concluded, "He is worthy to be a Rosh Yeshiva in Volozhin." Any person who cares about the truth so much that he is willing to suffer the embarrassment of having to admit his own mistake for the sake of truth, is definitely worthy to be a Rosh Yeshiva in Volozhin.

To be a Torah personality, to be a Torah Jew, does not mean to be perfect. It means first and foremost to be a man of truth. To never ever lie. Not to others and not to yourself. It means to demand of yourself the highest and deepest levels of integrity, to be committed to the complete "emes," truth, and to nothing but the truth.

In the words of the Tzemach Tzedek, the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, in his book "Sefer Hachakirah," a work on Jewish philosophy:

.אהוב את אריסטו, אהוב את סיקריטוס, אהוב את אפלטון, אבל אהוב את האמת יותר מכולם

"Love Aristotle, Love Socrates, Love Plato. But love the truth more than all of them."

The Quality of Truth

This is the quality of the Jewish people conveyed in this verse. Truth is the most valuable commodity in life. Because it is reality; it is real. When the Jewish people realized the seed was not growing, the firstborn can't do the job, instead of lying to themselves and to others and saying, "let's maintain the façade," they exposed the barren seed, and declared: Time to move on; time to bring in the Levites. It is this quality that conferred upon our people the number of the five books of the Torah—the Torah of truth.

It is true in each of our lives: Only when you become completely honest with your own condition and reality, confessing that your seed has grown nothing, can you truly make something of yourself and become a genuine source of leadership and inspiration to yourself and others.

Today's Labels

What happened to this obsession with truth in political leadership and the media today? The entire purpose of media is to tell the true story. Yet we painfully wonder: what happened with the search for truth concerning Israel, Hamas, anti-semitism, morality, abortion, transgender, and issues concerning the future of civilization? We are witnessing a culture in which even media outlets are often ready to eclipse or partially ignore aspects of truth for all types of considerations, chief among them is a lack of respect for truth.

The value of truth is no more—unless each and every one of us will stand up for truth. It begins in our own lives, and it continues to influence communities around us.

The Path of Healing

I have encountered many brave souls who have endured profound trauma and pain. I am in awe of their soul's courageous fight for truth. From childhood, they absorbed many toxic lies, but the anxiety inside of them was begging and fighting for the truth. The truth gave them no solace and rest. What pains them so deeply about so many of their family members and the religious establishment they live in are the cover-ups, lies, and deception, making them feel that they are crazy.

Those days are over. Healing will only come from all of us confronting the truth and nothing but the truth. If G-d is real and Torah is real, we have nothing to fear when all truth will be exposed.

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1 Rashi concludes: I saw this in Genesis Rabbah [3:5]. Note that this is not found in Gen. Rabbah, but in Leviticus Rabbah 2:4.
2 See Talmud Bava Kama 92, as explained at length in Sichas Shabbos Eikev 5748.
3 There may be another hint in the comparison to the five books of the Chumash: Although the Torah divides into five sections, it nevertheless constitutes one, single entity. There is one Torah, not five. Similarly, although the Levites had a unique position, the Jews understood that we are still one. We all together form a single, indivisible nation. The nation is one, and no faction may consider itself inherently superior to any other, even though each one serves G-d in its own unique way. Ironically, this very same principle prompted the disastrous rebellion led by Korach, as we will read in two weeks. Korach and his followers argued that "the entire nation - they are all sacred," and thus challenged the authority of Moshe and Aaron. The rebels failed to realize that equality does not negate the need for authority. Rather, it means that regardless of where one stands on the hierarchy, he ultimately possesses the same, inherent value as everyone else above and below. It means that both the leaders and their constituents share equal responsibility and must view themselves as equally important in the formation and functioning of society.

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The Secret Jew & Incredible Survival of his Lost Manuscript

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The amazing story of Luis de Carvajal, a secret Jew who was murdered in the 1500s, and the unlikely survival of his handwritten memoirs.

Nearly five hundred years ago, Luis de Rodriguez Carvajal, a secret Jew living in terror of the Spanish Inquisition, penned the following words at great risk to his life: "To practice Judaism is not heresy; it is the will of the Lord our God."

The Jewish book he secretly wrote has been found and is on display for the first time in decades.

Luis de Rodriguez Carvajal and his family lived in the 1500s in Spain. Judaism had been banned in Spain in 1492 but many Jews, including the Rodriguez family, continued to secretly cling to Jewish faith and rituals, while living publicly as Catholics. The fearsome Spanish Inquisition ruthlessly hunted these secret Jews, torturing and executing anyone suspected of engaging in Jewish rituals.

In in 1580s, Luis de Rodriguez, his mother, father and siblings were invited to settle in the Nuevo Leon, an area in today's Mexico governed by Luis' uncle, Don Luis Carvajal. The family moved, and became close to Carvajal, changing their surname from Rodriguez and publicly embracing their powerful relative's Catholic faith.

In "New Spain", Luis de Rodriguez, now de Carvajal "the Younger," continued to keep his Jewish identity as best he could. On Fridays before Shabbat, Luis' mother and sisters washed the bed linens and prepared festive food, including a chicken dinner for Friday nights. The entire family wore their best clothes on Saturday, and the women of the household refrained from the sewing that customarily kept them busy (though they made sure to keep their sewing handy in case unexpected visitors dropped by).

For a month, he transmitted his knowledge to Luis, preparing him to be the leader of their circle of secret Jews.

Before Passover, Luis and other secret Jews in their Mexican community would slaughter a lamb, roast it and eat it, trying to recreate, as Luis described, the first Passover feast: "On foot, like people about to set out on a journey, staves in hands and loins girded". Their community also secretly celebrated the Jewish holidays Purim and Yom Kippur.

In 1585, Luis and his father, Francisco Rodriguez, who worked as barterers and traders, travelled together to Mexico City for business. There, Francisco became gravely ill. Fearing he might never recover, he told his son Luis all he could about their secret Jewish faith. For a month, he transmitted his knowledge to Luis, preparing him to be the leader of their circle of secret Jews. It was an intense time that profoundly changed the course of Luis' life.

When he returned home, Luis was more committed to his secret faith than ever. He circumcised himself and began to declare his Jewish beliefs publicly. He also encouraged other secret Jews to do the same. Sometime around 1590, Luis and his family were arrested for encouraging Judaism. His mother, Francisca Nunez de Carvajal, was tortured into near madness. The Inquisition authorities later said that under torture she'd implicated her husband and children as secret Jews.

During this time, Luis began writing his memoirs, titled "Memorias", in tiny script on miniature pages, about four by three inches. In this secret book, Luis seemed to give his imagination free reign, calling himself by a new name that might have had some secret meaning in his community, Joseph Lumbroso.

The book begins: "Saved from terrible dangers by the Lord, I, Joseph Lumbroso of the Hebrew nation…" and goes on to address itself to all "who believe in the Holy of Holies and who hope for great mercies."

"Memorias" eventually grew to 180 tiny pages penned in an almost impossibly small script. As well as Luis' memoirs, it included Jewish prayers, the Ten Commandments, and Maimonides' Thirteen Principles for Faith. Luis painstakingly stitched the book together; its small size implies that it was hidden in a pocket and carried with him.

Luis jumped out of a window to escape his horrific torture. Somehow, he survived.

Luis was briefly released from prison. Some modern scholars think this was so the Inquisition authorities could track his activities. Tragically, in 1596, he was arrested, along with his mother, four sisters, brother and a number of other Jews, and they were tortured. At one point, Luis was shown his manuscript and acknowledged that it was his. He was tortured so severely that he jumped out of a window to escape the agony. Somehow, he survived.

Finally, after weeks of gruesome torture and imprisonment, nine of the Jews were put to death in a mass public burning for the "crime" of being Jewish. The victims included Luis' mother, his sisters Isabel, Catalina and Leonor, and Luis himself. Luis was 30 years old. (Five years later, another sister, Mariana, was publicly burned at the stake.)

Miraculously, Luis' secret book somehow survived. Tattered, well-worn, its pages apparently turned over and over by an unknown number of readers through the years, "Memorias" eventually was placed in Mexico's National Archives, where it remained for hundreds of years, until vanishing in 1932.

For eight decades, "Memorias" remained lost. In Dec. 2015, it suddenly resurfaced in a London auction house.

No one knows who took it but modern scholars have a theory. At the time, at least three academics were researching the de Carvajal family at the National Archives. One historian accused a rival, a Jewish academic from Northwestern University near Chicago, of stealing the book. The Jewish academic spent approximately three months in jail for the theft but no evidence implicated him in the crime. It's thought that the academic who accused him was the true thief.

For eight decades, "Memorias" remained lost. Then, in December 2015, it suddenly resurfaced in a London auction house. Bloomsbury Auctions didn't recognize the book's importance, blandly describing it in their auction listings as "small devotional manuscripts" and pricing it at $1,500, a small fraction of the work's actual value.

In response to questioning about the document's whereabouts, all the auctioneers would reveal is that it came "from the library of a Michigan family...in their possession for several decades." Timothy Bolton, a specialist at the Bloomsbury Auctions, justified their decision to keep the previous owners' identities private saying "one of the fundamental cornerstones of the auction world is our client's privacy."

"Memorias" was bought in London, then promptly listed for sale in New York. There, Leonard Milberg, a prominent 85-year-old New York collector, saw it and recognized its importance. He consulted with experts who agreed that the tiny book was Luis de Carvajal's, and also cautioned Mr. Milberg that it had been stolen. "It is the earliest surviving personal narrative by a New World Jew...and the earliest surviving worship manuscript and account of coming to the New World," explains scholar David Szewczyk.

Mr. Milberg got in touch with Diego Gomez Pickering, the Consul General of Mexico in New York, and arranged to repatriate the book, paying tens of thousands of dollars of his own money to acquire the book so that it could be returned to Mexico's National Archives. He had only two requests. One was that before its repatriation, "Memorias" would be on view in New York, on display at the New York Historical Society.

Mr. Milberg also asked that digital copies of Luis de Carvajal's book be made for Princeton University and for Manhattan's Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue. This, Mr. Milberg explained, is a way of "getting back at anti-Semitism. I wanted to show that Jews were part of the fabric of life in the New World," he explained. "This book was written before the Pilgrims arrived."

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https://virtualjerusalem.com/my-fellow-rabbis-to-the-land-of-israel/

My Fellow Rabbis – To the Land of Israel!

The mitzvah of the moment is to awaken your congregations to take immediate steps to begin the process of Aliyah.

Rabbi Shlomo Aviner

IDF Rabbinate

Rabbi Shlomo Avineris Head of the Ateret Yerushalayim Yeshiva in the Old City of Jerusalem. Author of over 200 books on a wide variety of Jewish themes, he is known to occasionally adopt a literary style to convey an idea, in this call to Diaspora Rabbis he employs a fictitious Rabbi to communicate his message.

For more than twenty years I have been the Rabbi of a very influential shul in the Diaspora.

I call out to you from the depths of my heart – Make haste! Awaken the hearts of the myriads of our people to make Aliyah to our Homeland. I beseech you, not only to perform the mitzvah of living in Eretz Yisrael, a mitzvah which our Sages consider equal to in weight to all of the commandments of the Torah. I understood the vital place of this mitzvah ever since I began to learn Torah, but nevertheless I remained in the

Diaspora. I never spoke about the mitzvah to live in Israel, for reasons I won't specify, for these are the same reasons you too have chosen to remain in foreign lands.
Today I am frightened. It is true that I am not a bold warrior by nature, but now the great increase in anti-Semitism has me truly alarmed. My great-grandfather lived in Germany. When Hitler, may his name be erased, rose to power, the majority of Jews believed that there was no reason to panic, that the troubling period would pass, and so they remained ensconced where they were. The end proved tragic and most bitter. Fortunately my great-grandfather sensed the coming storm and fled. Because of that wise decision I am here today.
Today's rampant anti-Semitism isn't the only reason for concern. You all know as well as I do about the frightening rise in assimilation throughout the Diaspora which increases from decade to decade. Since the Holocaust, six million Jews have assimilated in what is called the "Silent Holocaust," may Heaven help us. And to our chagrin, the way to the abyss approaches at an unstoppable pace.
Right now I feel that we are facing a dire emergency. In addition to the plague of intermarriage, violence against Jews could break out in all corners of the Diaspora. In order to isolate Israel from the community of nations, foreign governments might close their airports to flights to and from the Jewish State. Diaspora Jews will be stranded, surrounded by wild mobs and unsympathetic authorities.
Therefore, I appeal to you, the mitzvah of the moment is to awaken your congregations to take immediate steps to begin the process of Aliyah as soon as possible by filling out the required documents and whatever papers necessary to have everything ready in order to insure their future, their family's future, and the future of our nation.
Be strong and of much courage.
With great honor and affection, and with my apology for adopting this literary strategy.

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https://rabbiefremgoldberg.org/

Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

Don't Spike the Ball

Parshas Behaaloscha begins with the mitzva of the kindling of the menorah in the Beis Ha'mikdash. The Torah relates that after the guidelines for the kindling were conveyed to Aharon, the kohen gadol, ויעש כן אהרון – Aharon did as he was told, faithfully complying with Hashem's command (8:3). Rashi famously comments that the Torah added this pasuk להגיד שבחו של אהרון שלא שינה – "To speak in praise of Aharon, that he did not deviate." The Torah here praises Aharon for doing precisely as he was told.
Many mefarshim raised the question of why Aharon deserves such שבח , praise, for kindling the menorah according to the rules. Would we have expected anything less from Aharon? And was this really such a remarkable achievement – obeying the rules – that rendered him worthy of praise?
Rav Yisroel Meir Druck, in Lahavos Eish, answers this question based on the background to these pesukim, as Rashi explains earlier. This section is preceded by the Torah's account of the special offerings brought by the nesi'im – the leaders of the tribes – to celebrate the חנוכת המשכן , the inauguration of the Mishkan. Every day for twelve days, the leader of one of the tribes came to the Mishkan with an elaborate series of offerings. The only tribe which
was not represented during this process was the tribe of Levi, and this caused the leader of that tribe – Aharon – to feel uneasy. It troubled him that neither he nor anyone else from the tribe of Levi took part in this celebration of the חנוכת המשכן . Rashi writes that Hashem responded to Aharon's concerns by reminding him of the precious mitzva of kindling the menorah which he was privileged to perform.
Hashem was telling Aharon, in Rashi's words, , שלך גדול משלהם שאתה מדליק ומטיב את הנרות – "Yours is greater than theirs, for you kindle and clean the lamps." On this basis, Rav Druck explains, we can perhaps understand why Aharon is praised שלא שינה , for not deviating. This might mean that Aharon's attitude toward this mitzva did not change even after being informed that ,שלך גדול משלהם that this was a greater privilege than bringing offerings for the חנוכת המשכן . Aharon could have then looked down on the nesi'im, felt superior to them, and gloated about his special status, which God Himself described as גדול משלהם , greater
than theirs. But he didn't do that. ויעש כן אהרון – he simply continued doing his job, without fanfare, without seeking publicity, without trying to draw any attention to himself, and without any condescension. This is indeed שבח , praise for Aharon, for humbly going about his business without any tinge of competitiveness or one-upmanship. It has been said that this is – or at least was – the difference between football and baseball. When a football player scores a touchdown, he spikes the ball in dramatic fashion, and dances and runs about wildly, trying to make as big a spectacle as he can. But when a batter would hit a homerun, he would simply run around the bases, without fanfare. Rashi here is telling us to be like that batter – to just lower our heads and do our job, without making a public spectacle. We shouldn't spike the ball, create drama in an attempt to attract attention or show off. Our focus should be ויעש כן אהרון – just doing what we're supposed to do, without gloating and without looking for recognition.
This is such a crucial lesson for our time, when our world measures success in terms of fame and notoriety, based on "likes," "followers," and "viral" content. Everyone strives to be an "influencer," to achieve fame, to become known, to garner attention. This is not the way a Torah Jew is supposed to live. We are to simply do our job, to fulfill our duties, without concerning ourselves with whether we are noticed, admired or celebrated. Of course, it is acceptable and even worthwhile to take pride in our achievements. But our objective should never be to attain fame or notoriety, and we must aim instead to be Hashem's faithful servants, doing what we are supposed to do, regardless of whether anyone notices.

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from: Rabbi Yochanan Zweig <genesis@torah.org>
to: rabbizweig@torah.org subject: Rabbi Zweig

Parshas Beha'aloscha

Rav Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Rosi Behar, Raizel bas Yitzchak.

Not for Profit

Two men remained in the camp, the name of one was Eldad and the name of the other was Medad, and the Holy Spirit rested upon them […] and they prophesied in the camp (11:26).
After a series of difficult incidents in which Bnei Yisroel acted improperly and were subsequently punished by Hashem, Moshe pleads with Hashem that he was unable to bear the burden of the entire nation by himself (see 11:14). In fact, upon seeing the punishment that Bnei Yisroel were about to receive, he begs Hashem to kill him first (see 11:15 and Rash ad loc).
Hashem responds that Moshe is to gather seventy men from the elders of Bnei Yisroel who will receive a measure of his increased prophecy and they will share the burden along with him (see 11:18 and Rashi ad loc).
Moshe recognizes that seventy does not divide evenly by 12 and is concerned that there will be some jealousy among the tribes who receive less representation among these seventy elders. Therefore, Moshe devises a lottery to pick who the chosen elders will be (see Rashi 11:26). Eldad and Medad were actually among those who were chosen to join the seventy elders, but they remained in the camp, eschewing this appointment for they felt unworthy of it.
Moshe's son Gershom ran to inform his father that Eldad and Medad were in the camp prophesying. There is some discussion in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 17a) as to what exactly the prophecy was that they were relating. In any event, Moshe's longtime student-attendant Yehoshua Bin Nun was outraged and demanded, "My master Moshe, destroy them!" (see 11:28). Rashi (ad loc) explains that Yehoshua was not asking that they be killed (they hadn't seemed to commit any offense worthy of capital punishment), rather Yehoshua wanted them to be given responsibility to tend to the needs of the

community, which would cause them to be obliterated. In other words, the responsibilities of leadership would cause them to self-destruct.
Yet when Bnei Yisroel sinned with the golden calf, "Hashem spoke to Moshe, 'Go, descend, for your nation has become corrupted"' (Shemos 32:7) and Rashi (ad loc) explains that Hashem told Moshe, "descend from your greatness, for I have only made you great on their account."
Does leadership cause one to self-destruct or is it a source of greatness?
The answer, of course, is that there are two types of leaders. There are those leaders who seek positions of leadership primarily as a way of helping others; for whom no sacrifice is too great because their quest for leadership is borne out of a love for the people and community. Given the opportunity to do more they shine and achieve greatness. Not that the course of their leadership will be easy and without frustration. In fact, leadership can be very painful (as mentioned above, Moshe asks Hashem to kill him before He punishes Bnei Yisroel – presumably so that Moshe won't have to endure the pain of watching Bnei Yisroel suffer). Nevertheless, at the end of the day, these leaders are fulfilled by being able to help others.
By contrast, there are others who seek positions of leadership primarily as a means to fulfilling their own ambitions. Yes they agree to serve the people, but their personal agenda is always in the foreground. This kind of leader will be destroyed when accepting the yoke of communal responsibility because being a servant of the people is exactly that – servitude not lordship (see Talmud Horayos 10a).
To fully understand Yehoshua's concern about Eldad and Medad and why he reacts so violently, we must consider the current events at the time.
According to Ibn Ezra (and others), the whole sad chapter of Korach and his uprising took place in the weeks before this incident. Rashi also states that the reason Korach was so infuriated was that he felt personally cheated by the appointment of his cousin (instead of him) to head the tribe of Levi – an event that happened in the prior month. Although Rashi seems to hold that the parts of the rebellion took place after the story of the spies, he also states that Korach's rebellion began in Chatzeiros (right after the story of the quail).
Yehoshua must have known about Korach's dissatisfaction and rabble rousing. Perhaps, Yehoshua thought that Eldad and Medad were also trying to undermine Moshe Rabbeinu (one of the opinions in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 17a) holds that they were prophesying the death of Moshe). Yehoshua understood that the only way to deal with these types of personalities is to give them exactly what they desire. That would ensure their destruction and put an end to their challenge to Moshe.
Free for All
Moshe heard the people weeping by their families, each one at the entrance of his tent […] (11:10).
This week's parsha lists various complaints that Bnei Yisroel leveled at Hashem/Moshe. One of the issues that they complained bitterly about was the miraculous מן (manna). Remarkably, one of the pesukim (11:10) that seemingly describes the depths of their unhappiness with the מן is actually interpreted by Chazal in an entirely different direction.
The Gemara (Shabbos 130a) states: "Any mitzvah that Bnei Yisroel accepted in a quarrelsome manner, such as the prohibition against incestuous relationships, as the Torah (ibid) states, 'Moshe heard the people weeping by their families' (they were weeping because they had been prohibited from marrying their family members) is likewise still fulfilled while quarreling; for there is no kesuvah (marriage contract) that doesn't cause the parties to quarrel."
This seems to be a little odd. After all, a wedding is a time of great happiness. Why should a kesuvah cause quarreling more than any other financial arrangement? Furthermore, what does this have to do with the fact that they were bitter about the prohibition against incestuous relationships?
We must begin by examining the root cause for having forbidden relationships in the first place. Ramban in Parshas Achrei Mos posits that it would only be natural for people to choose their closest relatives as mates. For example, many of the complications of trying to merge two disparate families, disparate cultures, or dealing with inheritance issues would dissipate if a man were to marry his sister. Why are we forbidden to marry our closest relatives?
In Bereishis (2:18) Hashem said, "it is not good for man to be alone, I will make a compatible helper for him." Rashi there explains that if man were self-sufficient he would be comparing himself to God. Just as God is one above, man is one below. In other words, man would consider himself more or less equal to God on the plane below. This would cause man to become totally egocentric and self-centered.
Therefore, Hashem created a partner for man, someone he would have to merge with to balance him out and become a helpmate and an opposing opinion. This "merger" requires a true partner, one who is a totally separate entity and would not be swallowed up by the merger. Our closest relatives are ones that we are overly familiar with, if we go into our sister's home we feel perfectly comfortable opening the refrigerator and helping ourselves to whatever we want. That is, we would always take what we want because it is just an extension of ourselves. The same is true, of course, with parents, children, aunts, uncles, etc.
On the face of it, completing the kesuvah at a wedding is a very odd custom; imagine if at every non-Jewish wedding there would be a public reading of a financial arrangement (such as a prenup) between the bride and groom. All of the guests would feel uncomfortable and it would be inappropriate. Why is the kesuvah such a central part of the Jewish wedding?
The ultimate expression that we are merging with an outside party is the kesuvah. It is a reminder that the husband cannot just be a taker, like one living in a parents' home. The kesuvah is a testament to the fact that the husband has real responsibilities as a giver. It's a reminder that the husband is merging with someone who isn't just an extension of himself; he now has to negotiate his life within someone else's space. Every kesuvah is a reminder of this concept, and can easily become a source of conflict. In this way, the kesuvah becomes the de facto definition of a Jewish marriage.

From Alan Fisher <AFisherADS@Yahoo.com>
Potomac Torah Study Center
Vol. 11 #37, June 20-21, 2024; 16-16 Sivan 5784; Behaalotecha. 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. Hamas continues to manipulate the media while pretending to negotiate with Israel. Hersh Polin Goldberg, cousin of very close friends of ours and a U.S. citizen, remains a captive. Concerns are increasing that fewer than half of the hostages are still alive. We continue our prayers for the hostages and all our people stuck in Gaza. May our people in Israel wipe out the evil of Hamas, protect us from violence by anti-Semites around the world, and restore peace for our people quickly and successfully – with the continued help of Hashem.
Behaalotecha is a long, complex parsha with numerous episodes and a complete change in mood. The parsha opens with excitement while B'Nai Yisrael complete final preparations to leave the base of Har Sinai and start the final eleven day march to Eretz Yisrael. The sixth aliyah opens with two pasookim in inverted nuns (like brackets) describing how the journey starts and should have gone. Suddenly, without warning, some people start complaining, without any specific reason. Both Hashem and Moshe furiously call this behavior evil. The people complain about eating only manna – Hashem's food – and long for the variety of foods that they ate in Egypt (while slaves!).
Rabbi David Fohrman and his scholars at alephbeta.org explain that the people who try to grind, pound, and bake the manna, hoping to make it into cakes, are rejecting a gift of pure food from heaven, a treasure from Hashem. This behavior parallels the behavior of Adam and Chava Rishon in Gan Eden. God gives them a choice of any food in the garden, except for the fruit from one special tree. Of course, that is the food that the Rishon family wants, and as a result they are no longer able to live in Hashem's special place.
Before leaving the camp, the people are excited to be going to the land that Hashem had promised to their ancestors. After starting the journey and

complaining, there is a recurring theme of gathering. The people gather manna and quail.

At God's command, Moshe gathers seventy elders to share the burden of playing nursemaid to the people. After Miriam and Aharon complain about Moshe no longer performing the role of husband to Tziporah, the people wait a week and then "gather" Miriam back to the camp. "Asaf," the root of the word to gather, which appears as a leitmotif in the parsha, is the term that the Torah uses for a person who dies. The parsha that opens with hope ends with images of death.

Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander, Rosh Yeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone, focuses on the message of Behaalotecha for us today. God directs Moshe to make a pair of silver trumpets to call the people for important announcements. Each generation must craft its own trumpets. Rabbi Brander explains that the needs of the community change over time. The spiritual needs of B'Nai Yisrael during Yehoshua's leadership are different from what they need during Moshe's generation. These needs change constantly. Today our people need spiritual leadership, including special trumpet sounds, to help us grow as a people and a Divine Nation. Rabbi Yehoshua Gordon, z"l, focuses on Pesach Sheni, the second chance for those who are tamai and cannot participate in the Korban Pesach with the community and their families. Pesach Sheni is a second chance. The Rebbe reminds us that the theme of Pesach Sheni is that it is never too late to return to Judaism. In the Midbar, Dan, a large tribe (in population) would travel at the rear and act as a lost and found, picking up items that any of the people lose and returning them to the proper owners. Dan represents the message of Pesach Sheni, always give our people a second chance, an opportunity to repent and return to B'Nai Yisrael.

Although Behaalotecha has positive messages for us, it is the beginning of the end of the generation of the Exodus. Behaalotecha ends with Miriam's tzaraat for speaking lashon hora. In Shelach, God punishes the ten Meraglim who commit lashon hora against Eretz Yisrael. Shelach concludes with the mitzvah of tzitzit. Korach ridicules Moshe with the requirement of tzitzit at the corners of our garments and concludes that it is ridiculous to require tzitzit for a garment that is completely blue. The thematic connections among these parashot demonstrate that they are closely connected. When Miriam ends up with tzaraat, she must stay outside the camp for seven days. The people wait that week until she recovers. Rabbi Yitzchok Magriso, an 18 th Century author from Constantinople, studied the dates and locations of the people at the time carefully and discovered that Miriam's tzaraat (chapter 12), the departure of the Meraglim (chapter 13), and Korach's rebellion (chapter 16) all take place during a single week, between 22 and 29 Sivan in the second year after the Exodus. (See Torah Anthology 13: 333-34.) After the Torah reports the law of the Red Heifer (chapter 19), there is a 38 year gap, and the Torah resumes at chapter 20 with the events of the final year. Behaalotecha, Shelach, and Korach fill out the implications of the complaints of the people that start as soon as B'Nai Yisrael leave the base of Har Sinai for the final journey to Eretz Yisrael. The leitmotif of asaf, gathering, shows that the doom of the generation of the Exodus starts as soon as the people look for reasons to complain. By the end of Korach, this generation's fate of dying in the desert is clear. It will be their children's generation that will finally be worthy of entering and taking over the land that Hashem had promised to our Avot.

Shabbat Shalom, Hannah and Alan Fisher

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.

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.

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

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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!