

## Potomac Torah Study Center

Vol. 9 #38, June 17, 2022; 18 Sivan 5782; Behaalotecha 5782

**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](http://www.PotomacTorah.org). Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah archives.**

---

Behaalotecha is a long, complex parsha that contains numerous incidents and changes in mood. The parsha opens with the excitement of the final preparations before B'Nai Yisrael leave the base of Har Sinai for a final "short" journey to Canaan (eleven days by foot to travel directly). Chazal look to 10:35-36, set off in the Torah with inverted Nuns (looking like brackets), and interpret these two pasookim as a separate Sefer. They therefore conclude that Behaalotecha runs across three books of the Torah (Bemidbar, inverted nuns, and post-Bemidbar).

The first section, through 10:34, is full of anticipation, as B'Nai Yisrael look forward to reaching their goal in eleven days. The brackets (inverted nuns) enclose two pasookim of Moshe's words as the camp would move toward Israel (10:35-36). This short section becomes misplaced once the complaints anger God and lead to disaster. There is no place for Moshe's praises when the people's complaints stop the progress toward Israel. The section 11:1-12:16 opens with murmuring, then complaints, and then disaster. No wonder the Rabbis conclude that Behaalotecha could not be a single story but must be parts of different sections.

In one of his most famous Devrei Torah, Rav Soloveitchik presents a coherent interpretation that combines all the incidents in the parsha into a consistent story. 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. I am attaching the Rav's article to the E-mail (and archive) versions of my Devrei Torah, and hopefully everyone will read and come to his own conclusion.

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 (see Rabbi Wisniewsky, below). 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.)

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.

Rabbi Sacks' analysis suggests a lesson for Jews. 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 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 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 support Israel against some anti-Semitic petitions, 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.

One must devote considerable effort to work out what is happening and when in the Torah. Bereshis and Noach cover two thousand years of history in two weeks of Torah reading. We are about to conclude 23 parashot, covering 67 chapters, covering 13 months – and it takes considerable effort to determine the chronological order and to work out, for example, that three different stories (Miriam's tzaraat, the Meraglim, and Korach) all take place the same week (see Torah Anthology 13:333-34). My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, loved to delve into the seventy layers of meaning in the Torah. The more I delve, the more exciting the quest becomes. Shabbat Shalom.

---

**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](http://www.alephbeta.org). Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.**

---

**Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Yehoshua Mayer HaLevi ben Nechama Zelda, Yonatan Ophir ben Ilana, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, who need our prayers.** Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom,  
Hannah & Alan

---

## **Dvar Torah: Behaaloscha: Anybody Anybody (2007)**

by Rabbi Label Lam

**Then HASHEM said to Moshe, "Is the Hand of HASHEM short? Now you will see if My word comes true for you or not!" (Bamidbar 11:23).**

This phrase is a stand-alone line in the Torah? Is the Hand of HASHEM short? It is hauntingly similar to the rebuke Abrahm delivers to Sara after the laugh. "Is something too wondrous for HASHEM!?" As if to say, "Oh ye of little faith, if HASHEM wills it a 90 year old woman can be a mother!"

While in Israel one summer I joined a class given by Uri Zohar. He had been Israel's top entertainer for many years until an encounter with a rabbi turned the talents of his mind to Torah at the age of forty. At the end of one class he related a story: He had just received a call from an old friend, someone from the old bohemian days. This fellow and his wife had gone out to the beach like so many others on the Holy Shabbos! After a day of sun bathing he returned to the car with his wife and soon became aware that he could not find his keys. After checking all his pockets he implored his wife to search the depth of her pocket book for the missing keys. He retraced his steps in the sand back to the place where their blanket had been. No keys. He emptied the nearby trash can. No keys. He looked under the car. Still no keys! People were driving away with ease and the sun was an orange ball setting in the western sky. In a moment of desperation he began to march across the sand and out to the water as his wife looked on in horror. He waded up to his thighs in water.

Rabbi Uri Zohar stood from his chair to demonstrate. It was obvious he had lost none of his dramatic flair. The fellow raised his hands and shouted out, "Elochim! Elochim! Give me my keys!" At that very moment, floating in the water, touching his leg were his keys. He came back to the car shaken and his wife observed that he had found the keys. He told her that he had found more than the keys. That Sunday morning he gave a call to his old friend Uri Zohar to ask, "Where do I begin?"

What was the greater improbability; that this man untutored in prayer should find his keys in the Mediterranean Sea the very moment he cried out or that this secular Israeli at the beach one Shabbos would wake up the next week as a Shomer Shabbos or as one who puts on Tallis and Tefilin? We should not be so surprised because three times a day we say, "HASHEM is close all, to all who call out to Him in truth!" (Tehillim 145) Now, if that story sounds like it was across the ocean, it was. Here's the same story on this side of the Atlantic. A couple who had gone to a number of seminars decided months earlier to send their boy and girl to a Hebrew Day School. At an evening class in their apartment in Riverdale the father told me something that had just occurred. Since he would come home from work earlier than his wife he would take his kids and a few others out to a local park after school. Later he would shepherd them back to the apartment for dinner-homework.

That week, when it came time to leave the park, and all the children were around him he realized that he couldn't find his keys. Even if the door man would let them into the building he would be left waiting for hours in the hallway till his wife came home. He began to fret anxiously as he searched and searched for the keys. His eight year old boy, now newly immersed in Yeshiva for only a few months watched as his father became nervous, and he too began to feel upset. So he grasped his tennis ball, the one he had just been playing with, like you and I would hold a Sefer Tehillim, and he whispered with sincerity, "HASHEM, please help my father find his keys!" Then he threw the ball any which way with all his might and when he went to pick up the ball there were his father's keys touching the ball. Astonished? Why? "

HASHEM is close to all who call to Him in truth!" Nothing is lost in HASHEM's world. No one is lost. HASHEM can find anybody-anything and **anybody-anybody**.

Good Shabbos!

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/dvartorah-5775-behaaloscha/>

---

## 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 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](http://jewishideas.org) or you may send your check to Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2 West 70th Street, New York, NY 10023. Ed.: Please join me in helping the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals at this time.**

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

---

## **The Universalistic Vision of Judaism**

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel \*

At the Revelation at Mount Sinai, God chose the people of Israel to receive the Torah. This unique and unprecedented covenant between God and a group of human beings was to have an immense influence on human civilization. The Torah prescribed a specific way of life for the Jewish people. Yet, the Revelation — though experienced directly by Israel -- was also concerned with humanity as a whole.

A fascinating Midrash points out that at the Revelation the voice of God divided into seventy languages, representing the seventy nations of the world -- i.e. all of humanity. The Torah, while containing a particular message for the people of Israel, also includes a universal message for all human beings.

Paul Johnson, in his *History of the Jews*, has noted that “the world without the Jews would have been a radically different place.... To them we owe the idea of equality before the law, both divine and human; of the sanctity of life and the dignity of the human person; of the individual conscience and so of personal redemption; of the collective conscience and so of

social responsibility; of peace as an abstract ideal and love as a foundation of justice, and many other items which constitute the basic moral furniture of the human mind. Without the Jews, it might have been a much emptier place.”

The Jewish enterprise, then, has been both particularistic and universalistic. The Torah and rabbinic tradition have been the guiding forces animating Jewish life over the millennia. The halakha (Jewish law) has been understood by the Jewish people as a Divinely-bestowed way of life. Through living a life of righteousness based on Torah and halakha, Jews thereby serve as “a light unto the nations”. The achievement of this ideal is dependent upon faithfulness to the particular teachings of the Torah as well as a universalistic vision for the well-being of all humanity.

Maintaining this equilibrium is a basic desideratum of Judaism. Yet, this vital balance is threatened by various trends in modern Jewish life.

On the one hand are those who stress universalism, while playing down particularism as much as possible. They advocate Jewish ethics, but denigrate the need to fulfill the specific ritual commandments of the Torah. On the other hand are those who are devoted to the ceremonial rituals, but who are very little involved with the world at large. They retreat into their own spiritual and physical ghettos, often trying to drive as many wedges as possible between themselves and the rest of society. Both of these approaches represent a deviation from the harmonious balance implicit in classic Judaism. Our ethical teachings are rooted in the mitzvot. An ethical universalism outside the context of observance of the mitzvot is not true to the Jewish religious genius. Likewise, a parochial commitment to rituals, without a concomitant concern for universalistic ethics, is also an aberration. Judaism emptied of its particularistic mitzvot is hollow; Judaism robbed of its universalistic vision is cult-like, rather than a world religion.

The current tendency within the traditionally-observant community has been toward particularism. This tendency manifests itself in the phenomenal growth of the hareidi (right-wing) community, as well as its pervasive influence throughout contemporary Orthodox Jewish life. Religious self-sufficiency and spiritual isolationism are dominant themes in the right-wing Orthodox way of thinking.

The turn inward within contemporary traditional Judaism actually has deep roots in Jewish history. It reflects centuries of anti-Jewish persecution. In the face of vast hostility and cruelty committed against Jews since antiquity, it was natural for Jews to turn inward, and to develop negative attitudes toward their non-Jewish oppressors. Could Jews fully trust non-Jews whose societies denigrated Jews and Judaism, forced Jews into ghettos, compelled Jews to forsake Judaism by converting to the dominant religion of the land, and deprived Jews of elementary civil rights? Centuries of persecution taught Jews to be suspicious of the non-Jewish world, to focus on their own internal Jewish needs, and leave the non-Jews to take care of themselves.

The negative attitude toward the non-Jewish world found expression in rabbinic literature. For example, the Mishna (Sanhedrin 4:5) teaches that God began humanity by creating an individual human being, Adam, “to teach that if anyone destroy a single soul from humankind, Scripture charges him as though he had destroyed a whole world, and whoever saves a single soul from humankind, Scripture credits him as though he had saved a whole world.” This is certainly a universalistic teaching on the value of human life. Yet, at some point, the text of this Mishna was revised, so that many editions read that Adam was created alone “to teach that if anyone destroy a single soul from Israel, Scripture charges him as though he had destroyed a whole world, and whoever saves a single soul from Israel, Scripture credits him as though he had saved a whole world.” The text has thus been transformed to a quite particularist teaching about the value of a Jewish life, rather than the value of all human life.

The negative attitudes toward the non-Jewish world have led to a serious distortion of the original teachings of Judaism. A narrow, xenophobic approach has developed, especially among those Jews who have felt most alienated and threatened by non-Jews.

Rabbi Aharon Soloveichik offered a more nuanced approach in an address to a conference of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America in 1966, in which he dealt with the extent of Jewish responsibility toward non-Jews. He argued that Jews are obliged to love fellow Jews unconditionally, and are absolutely responsible for the welfare of all Jews. When it comes to non-Jews, though, the obligation is not identical. Since all human beings are created in the image of God, Jews obviously have to respect this fact when dealing with non-Jews. Yet, the extent of responsibility toward non-Jews is conditional: if they act properly toward us, we are obliged to act properly toward them. But if non-Jews hate us or persecute us, we have no obligation to be kind to them or work for their well-being. These sentiments reflect Jewish caution when dealing with a non-Jewish world that has a long history of persecuting Jews.

During the modern period, when Jews gained full civil rights in the Western countries, efforts have been made to shake off the mistrust of the centuries, and to strengthen the universalistic impulse within Judaism. Yet, these efforts have met resistance in the more traditionally-oriented Jewish communities. Those modern Jews who have been most identified with universalistic attitudes have also tended to be those who have moved away from traditional religious beliefs and observances. Thus, universalism has been identified with assimilation and loss of Jewish religious integrity. Although the tendency toward isolationism may be understandable from a historical and sociological perspective, nevertheless, it is a tendency which needs to be corrected. Vibrant religious Jewish life needs to look outward as well as inward, and to regain its spiritual vision that focuses on all humanity.

The Torah )Devarim 4:6-7( tells the Israelites to observe and fulfill the commandments: “For this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, that, when they hear all these statutes shall say: ‘surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people’; for what great nation is there that has God so near unto them, as the Lord our God is whenever we call upon Him?” Interestingly, the Torah is concerned that the Israelites be perceived in a positive light by the nations of the world. The medieval Italian commentator, Rabbi Obadia Seforno, comments on verse seven: “The reason it is appropriate to be concerned that you should be considered wise and understanding in the eyes of the nations is that God, may He be blessed, is close to us when we call upon Him. This shows that He chose us from all the nations. And if the nations should think that you are fools, it will be a desecration of God’s Name, for they will say: ‘This is God’s people.’ Since the people of the world look upon the Jews as the bearers of God’s Torah, the Israelites’ behavior reflects back upon the Almighty. If the Israelites are righteous and wise, then they sanctify God’s name; conversely, if they are foolish and unrighteous, they profane God’s name. The Israelites, thus, are not given the option of living in isolation without caring about the opinions of others. On the contrary, they need to see themselves as emissaries of the Almighty.

These passages in Devarim are cited by a great 19th century sage, Rabbi Eliyahu Hazan )Taalumot Lev 1:4(. Rabbi Hazan had opened a school in Tripoli in which Jewish children were given instruction in religious topics, as well as in other subjects - including several languages. He pointed out that “it is the praise of our holy nation that the peoples of the world will say that this is surely a wise and understanding great nation with righteous laws and statutes, who should live among them. And if the scattered Jewish people would not know or understand the language of the people )among whom they live(, they would be – Heaven forbid – a laughing stock, a derision and a shame among the nations.” In this responsum, Rabbi Hazan has indicated that Torah law requires that Jews be perceived as a wise people. They are obligated to be understood by their non-Jewish neighbors. Although Jews have their own distinctive religious way of life, they nevertheless must interrelate constructively with the non-Jewish community.

But the Jewish responsibility to the non-Jewish world is not merely that of setting a good example of wisdom and righteousness. The Jewish tradition teaches a principled and active responsibility for all people. All human beings are created in the image of God.

The Midrash, commenting on the Song of Songs )4:1( observes that the people of Israel offered 70 sacrifices in the holy Temple during the festival of Succoth. These sacrifices were offered by the Jewish people to seek atonement for all the nations of the world )symbolized by the number 70(. Praying for the well-being of the nations is a powerful statement of concern and responsibility.

The Talmud )Gittin 61a( records the law that Jews are obligated to support the poor of the non-Jews along with the poor of the Jewish community. Moreover, Jews are obligated to visit the non-Jewish sick and to bury their dead. The Talmud specifies that these deeds of compassion and loving-kindness are to be done “because of the ways of peace.” In order to maintain a harmonious society, people need to care for each other and to offer help to those in need. Rabbi Haim David Halevy, late Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, has pointed out that our responsibility toward Muslims and Christians )as well as other non-idolaters( does not stem from expedience, but rather from a firmly established ethical imperative )Aseh Lekha Rav, 9:30 and 9:33(.

Jews are commanded to be constructive members of society. The Torah demands that we be righteous and compassionate. This responsibility is not confined merely to the broad category of social justice, but extends to the general upbuilding of human civilization as a whole. Rabbi Benzion Uziel )Hegyonei Uziel, Vol. 2, p. 98( discussed the classic concept of “yishuvo shel olam,” responsibility to help in the upbuilding of human civilization. This involves practical society building, but also includes expanding human knowledge. Scientific research, for example, helps us gain a deeper appreciation of God’s wisdom. It also leads to technological discoveries which improve the quality of life. Working to improve the human condition is a Jewish religious imperative.

As noted earlier, the Jewish impact on human civilization has been vast. We have given the world many ideas and ideals. On the other hand, we have also learned from the non-Jewish world. And we have been strengthened by non-Jews who have converted to Judaism. In the words of Rabbi Eliyahu Benamozegh )Israel and Humanity, trans. Maxwell Luria(, "each proselyte in becoming converted has contributed his own impulses and personal sentiments to the Israelite heritage." Rabbi Benamozegh argued that "in order to achieve the concept of a universal Providence extending to all peoples and sanctioning the legitimate rights of each, men must cease to believe that the national or ethnic group is all that counts, that mankind has no significant existence apart from the nation or tribe....We should not be surprised that such has not been the case with Hebraism, which teaches that all mankind has the same origin and thus that a single Providence looks over all."

Victor Hugo observed that "narrow horizons beget stunted ideas." Classic Judaism has included an idealistic universalistic world-view. Judaism's horizons have been great; and it has begotten great ideas. The challenge to modern Jews is to remain faithful to their distinctive mitzvot while maintaining a universalistic ethical idealism.

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

<https://www.jewishideas.org/article/universalistic-vision-judaism>

---

### **B'Haaloscha: Permission to Glow** by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine \*

The Parsha begins with the Mitzva to light the Menorah. Rashi reminds us of an important rule. The kindling must be "until the fire goes up on its own." Certainly, this is a technical requirement when lighting the Menorah. One must keep the kindling adjacent to the light being lit until it gains strength and glows nicely on its own. We are not to just quickly make contact and expect the new light to struggle to come to life. Stay present -- the Mitzvah requires -- until the light gains momentum and can burn on its own.

This Mitzva also guides us as parents and teachers. We are not to just make contact with those entrusted to us. We must stay present, be encouraging and nurturing, until they gain momentum and begin to glow on their own.

Even if we are not intending to be playing the role of parent or teacher in a particular relationship, the principle of enabling people to glow can come up in daily life. Sometimes we may encounter someone who has great spark, but has been close to snuffed out by comments made and by troubling experiences. As a friend and as human being, Hashem will sometimes place us in a place where we can remove the dirt that has been placed on the flame and enable it to finally glow as it should.

Consider, for example, that when Rabbi Paysach Krohn was in his teens, one of his writing mentors told him that his writing had too religious a tone, and that his writing would never amount to anything. That comment could well have stifled him. Instead, today, he is a beloved and popular author of over 20 books. We can be grateful that with fortitude and Hashem's kindness he moved beyond that unkind prognosis.

A particularly striking example of this occurred to me a number of years ago when a couple living in the community asked to meet with me. I anticipated some sort of Shalom Bayis topic that they wanted to work through. What emerged, however, was that the man was experiencing personal drag which was affecting how he processed comments that his wife would make. The comments seemed innocent, but he was repeatedly understanding his wife's comments as if they were intended to put him down.

As we met, I noticed how during the conversation he would repeatedly declare, "I am not stupid." I tried to be encouraging. I affirmed that he was a bright man. I reminded him that he was known in the community as a smart, kindly, and successful businessman. Yet, he kept coming back to the same comment. Any topic that we would bring up for discussion would only last a few minutes before this comment would surface. "I am not stupid."

I wondered to myself if perhaps there was something in his past that he could not let go of. I resolved that the next time he made this comment, I wouldn't sidestep it by affirming his worthiness and intelligence. Instead, I would meet his comment "head on" with a response.

Indeed, a few minutes later he declared, "I am not stupid." I replied with authority and determination, "No, you are not stupid." He looked at me a bit surprised, but clearly encouraged.

He continued, "And I am not an idiot."

I replied in a sincere but definitive tone, "No, you are not an idiot."

He looked at me with a mixture of appreciation and fiery determination and continued. He said, "And I am not an imbecile."

Although these words were not part of my typical working vocabulary, I replied in the rhythm we had just created, "No, you are not an imbecile."

It was quite clear that someone in his past had used these words on him and had left him with some serious emotional scars. I encouraged him to seek professional help, well beyond what my session would provide. But I did see how the start of healing can be brought about by another human being. Affirming his worthiness and helping him discount the negativity that had been heaped upon him, calmed him.

Two years later, Rosh Hashana time, he sent me a card with the simple words, "Thank you for your help."

Sometimes we are called upon to kindle lights until they glow. At other times we are called upon to help remove the dirt so that another human being can truly glow.

Wishing you and yours a wonderful Shabbos!

Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of over 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](http://www.care-mediation.com) and [www.teach613.org](http://www.teach613.org); his email is [RMRhine@gmail.com](mailto:RMRhine@gmail.com). **For information or to join any Torah613 classes, contact Rabbi Rhine.**

---

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

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer \* © 2021 \*\*

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

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

The Sforno continues and tells us that G-d's response to Moshe, "Would the Hand of G-d fall short?" was addressing this philosophical issue. G-d was telling Moshe that there are indeed means and ways for a person to be disgusted with all

foods and not only with the meat. Furthermore, this could be done without impacting their free will at all. Even once they no longer had any desires, they would be able to exercise their free will and stop complaining out of love and awe for G-d, if they want to.

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

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

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

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

\* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD.

\*\* Mazel-Tov to Rabbi Yehoshua and Rebbetzin Serena Singer on the birth of a baby girl this morning (17 Sivan). Because I am anticipating that he is unlikely to have time to send a new Dvar Torah today, I am reprinting one of his Devrei Torah on the parsha from his archives. Should he send in a new Dvar Torah, I'll switch later.

---

## **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 do it with a razor? (8:7)
3. How can the Israelites put their hands on the Levites, and what is the meaning of **והניף אהרן**? (8:10-11)
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 it 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 חִפּוֹסִים? Note that the verb חָסַד 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.

\* Rabbi Ovadia has a lengthy analysis of Sefer BeMidbar that he has broken into separate sections for each parsha. Watch his column each week for the full analysis. Rabbi Ovadia's treatment of the various parashot continues next week with Shelach. Because my word processor does not handle Hebrew well (especially going back and forth across word processing software), and because of possible Shemos, some of his Hebrew quotes may have the words backward, depending on your word processor. For the full version, see Rabbi Ovadia's postings at <https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets>

\*\* Torah VeAhava (now SephardicU.com). Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan (Potomac, MD) and faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school). **New: Many of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah are now available on Sefaria:** <https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets> Hebrew quotes from the Torah, omitted here, are in Rabbi Ovadia's original in Sefaria.

---

## Behaalotecha: Taking Inclusion Seriously

By Rabbi Eliezer Weinbach \*

How should we respond when there are those in our community who tell us that they feel excluded?

In this week's parsha Beha'alotcha, two people explain that they were tamei meit at the time of the Korban Pesach, and were therefore unable to bring it (Num 9:6). These people were upstanding members of the community, so much so that they had taken upon themselves to care for a dead person, one of the highest forms of chesed, as it cannot be repaid. These are people who take seriously their obligations to the community and to God.

Yet because of this, they were unable to bring the Korban Pesach. It seems unfair! The Korban Pesach commemorates the moment when HaShem took slaves out of Egypt and turned them into a nation, but these people, who were tending to the needs of the nation, are not able to bring that korban.

So these people approach Moshe and ask a heartfelt question: "Lamah nigara – Why should we be excluded?" (Num 9:7). Why are we being kept apart from the community that we are trying so hard to help and be a part of?

It is a bold question, because at first glance the answer is obvious. Sorry, you missed your chance. HaShem told us when to bring the korban. You did not do anything wrong per se, but this is just the way it is. You will get another chance in the future.

Yet Moshe responds differently. He listens to the story and is moved to action. Moshe brings the question to HaShem. Why should people who are not in the wrong, who are members in good standing, who actively participate in the community, need to continue to be excluded? Do we really need to stand on precedent when it is directly excluding real, good people? As a leader, Moshe sees his responsibility to elevate the needs of those who have been excluded by no fault of their own.

The result? HaShem agrees. Of course HaShem agrees! Why should they be excluded, there is no good reason. Moshe saw an injustice and took action immediately. He could have dismissed it and saved himself time and energy. He could

have said “Look, we know the halakha.” Instead, he worked hard to find a way to be more inclusive and remedy the injustice right away. That is the mark of a true leader who seeks to elevate everyone in their community.

There are many people in our communities who are crying out “Lamah nigara” and we have the easy answer of “You did not do anything wrong per se, but this is just the way it is.” We have not been going out of our way to make sure that everyone can come to shul. Hashem’s response to Moshe in Parshat Beha’alotcha teaches us that concerns of exclusion are legitimate, and warrant immediate consideration, if we want to build a holy nation.

Shabbat Shalom.

\* Rabbi Eliezer Weinbach, an experimental educator, is pursuing graduate level studies in Jewish education and in the environment.

<https://library.yct Torah.org/2022/06/behaalotcha22/>

---

## **The Meat Meeting of 2022**

By Rabbi Moshe Rube \*

This week our Torah narrative continues with the story of Jews who demanded meat and the glorious vegetables they used to eat in Egypt instead of the manna from Heaven.

It didn't end up well for them.

But I wonder how the story would have played out in 2022. Specifically, how would that first meeting of the complainers go before they went to yell at Moshe and Aharon?

Perhaps it would have gone something like this. (I have abbreviated all the character names as JP1 (Jewish Person 1), JP2, JP3 etc.)

JP1: Greetings all. We're here to discuss our complaint to present to Moshe that we're not getting the meat we need. All we have is the manna.

JP2: Agreed. The manna has too many carbs anyway and not enough protein.

JP3: Wait a minute. I didn't know this meeting was about meat. Haven't you read the studies that meat leads to heart disease?

JP2: I've read those studies. They had flawed sample sizes. Plus I used to eat meat all the time in Egypt, and my blood pressure stayed pretty normal. You should meet my nutritionist. She told me that all this carb heavy food is killing us. Especially the manna. It sure tastes like honey, which is a simple carb as opposed to a complex carb. I haven't gotten on the scale, but I think I've gained a few pounds

JP4: No you haven't. You're just making an unrealistic comparison to the idealized body models our desert camp is saturated with.

JP1: You're missing the point. Whatever everyone's nutritionist says, meat is a huge part of the human experience. I remember my dad grilling us thick steaks every Sunday evening. I can still smell the enticing flavor of his homemade steak sauce applied at just the right time. I want to have that with my kids. But all I can do with the manna is make something resembling sweet french toast.

JP5: I hear you JP1. But back then, they didn't have the cruel animal slaughterhouse farms they have now.

JP3: And weren't you at Talmud class this week? Our Sages say that the manna can change its taste based on whatever you want. You can still have the taste of steak with the manna.

JP1: It's not the same. Our Sages also say that a person eats with their eyes. Hidden taste doesn't do it for me. I and my family need to see and feel our meat.

JP5: Let's compromise then. I heard Beyond Burgers are pretty good. Let's get Moshe to ask God to rain those down.

JP3: I don't know. Those are still processed. If we're going to ask for that, we should ask also for raw, organic, sustainably sourced, kale. I remember I used to eat that in Egypt. Good times.

JP4: Now you're the one being unrealistic. You were a slave. That was slave food.

JP3: So what? The point was all I needed was a bite of kale to build the pyramids. It's the most natural food for us.

JP1: Natural!? You think our hunter-gatherer ancestors ate kale? They ate meat!

JP5: Calm down everybody. There's no reason we can't voice a strong demand for steak, Beyond Burgers and kale.

JP1: But once we start adding all types of food, all 3 million Jews will add to the list. Everyone's on some kind of special diet nowadays. We can't submit an effective complaint with hundreds of items on it.

JP3: Wait. I know I'm the vegan here. But I have a solution that I think will make everyone happy.

Everyone Else: What is it?

JP3: Let's ask Moshe to ask God to send down a Whole Foods from heaven.

Shabbat Shalom.

\* Rabbi, Knesseth Israel Congregation, Birmingham, AL.

---

## **Rav Kook Torah** **BeHa'alotecha: The Triumph of the Ark**

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

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

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

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

### **The Miracle at the Arnon Pass**

As the Jewish people prepared to enter the Land of Israel, the Emorites (one of the Canaanite nations) laid a trap for them. They chipped away hiding places along a narrow pass in the Arnon canyon, across the Jordan River. Emorite soldiers hid in these crevices, waiting for the Israelites to pass through, when they could attack them with great advantage.

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

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

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

### **The Battles of Et and Vahav**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<http://www.ravkooktorah.org/BEHAALOT58.htm>

---

## **Leadership Beyond Despair (Behaalotecha 5770, 5777)**

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

Tanach, the Hebrew Bible, is remarkable for the extreme realism with which it portrays human character. Its heroes are not superhuman. Its non-heroes are not archetypal villains. The best have failings; the worst often have saving virtues. I know of no other religious literature quite like it.

This makes it very difficult to use biblical narrative to teach a simple, black-and-white approach to ethics. And that — argued R. Zvi Hirsch Chajes (*Mevo ha-Aggadot*) — is why rabbinic Midrash often systematically re-interprets the narrative so that the good become all-good and the bad all-bad. For sound educational reasons, Midrash paints the moral life in terms of black and white.

Yet the plain sense remains ("A biblical passage never loses its plain interpretation." Shabbat 63a), and it is important that we do not lose sight of it. It is as if monotheism brought into being at the same time a profound humanism. God in the Hebrew Bible is nothing like the gods of myth. They were half-human, half-divine. The result was that in the epic literature

of pagan cultures, human heroes were seen as almost like gods: semi-divine.

In stark contrast, monotheism creates a total distinction between God and humanity. If God is wholly God, then human beings can be seen as wholly human – subtle, complex mixtures of strength and weakness. We identify with the heroes of the Bible because, despite their greatness, they never cease to be human, nor do they aspire to be anything else. Hence the phenomenon of which the sedra of **Beha'alotecha provides a shattering example: the vulnerability of some of the greatest religious leaders of all time, to depression and despair.** [emphasis added]

The context is familiar enough. The Israelites are complaining about their food:

*"The rabble among them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, 'If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost — also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!'" Num 11:4-6*

This is not a new story. We have heard it before (see for example Exodus 16). Yet on this occasion, Moses experiences what one can only call a breakdown:

He asked the Lord,

*"Why have You brought this trouble on Your servant? What have I done to displease You that You put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? . . . I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how You are going to treat me, put me to death right now — if I have found favour in Your eyes — and do not let me face my own ruin." Num. 11:11-15*

Moses prays for death! Nor is he the only person in Tanach to do so. There are at least three others. There is Elijah, when after his successful confrontation with the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel, Queen Jezebel issues a warrant that he be killed:

*Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." I Kings 19:3-4*

There is Jonah, after God had forgiven the inhabitants of Nineveh:

*Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to the Lord, "O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." Jonah 4:1-3*

And there is Jeremiah, after the people fail to heed his message and publicly humiliate him:

*"O Lord, You enticed me, and I was enticed; You overpowered me and prevailed. I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me . . . The word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long . . . Cursed be the day I was born! May the day my mother bore me not be blessed! Cursed be the man who brought my father the news, made him very glad, saying, "A child is born to you — a son!" . . . Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?" Jeremiah 20:7-18*

Lehavdil elef havdalot: no comparison is intended between the religious heroes of Tanach and political heroes of the modern world. They are different types, living in different ages, functioning in different spheres. Yet we find a similar phenomenon in one of the great figures of the twentieth century, Winston Churchill. Throughout much of his life he was prone to periods of acute depression. He called it "the black dog." He told his daughter, "I have achieved a great deal to

achieve nothing in the end.” He told a friend that “he prays every day for death.” In 1944 he told his doctor, Lord Moran, that he kept himself from standing close to a train platform or overlooking the side of a ship because he might be tempted to commit suicide: “A second’s desperation would end everything”. [These quotes are taken from *Churchill’s Black Dog* by Anthony Storr.]

Why are the greatest so often haunted by a sense of failure? Storr, in the book mentioned above, offers some compelling psychological insights. But at the simplest level we see certain common features, at least among the biblical prophets: a passionate drive to change the world, combined with a deep sense of personal inadequacy. Moses says, “Who am I . . . that I should lead the Israelites out of Egypt?” (Ex. 3:11). Jeremiah says: “I cannot speak: I am only a child” (Jer. 1:6). Jonah tries to flee from his mission. **The very sense of responsibility that leads a prophet to heed the call of God can lead him to blame himself when the people around him do not heed the same call.** [emphasis added]

Yet it is **that same inner voice that ultimately holds the cure. The prophet does not believe in himself: he believes in God. He does not undertake to lead because he sees himself as a leader, but because he sees a task to be done and no one else willing to do it. His greatness lies not within himself but beyond himself: in his sense of being summoned to a task that must be done however inadequate he knows himself to be.** [emphasis added]

Despair can be part of leadership itself. For when the prophet sees himself reviled, rebuked, criticised; when his words fall on stony ground; when he sees people listening to what they want to hear, not what they need to hear – that is when the last layers of self are burned away, leaving only the task, the mission, the call. When that happens, a new greatness is born. It now no longer matters that the prophet is unpopular and unheeded. All that matters is the work and the One who has summoned him to it. That is when the prophet arrives at the truth stated by Rabbi Tarfon: “It is not for you to complete the task, but neither are you free to stand aside from it” (Avot 2:16).

Again without seeking to equate the sacred and the secular, I end with some words spoken by Theodore Roosevelt (in a speech to students at the Sorbonne, Paris, 23 April 1910), which sum up both the challenge and the consolation of leadership in cadences of timeless eloquence:

*It is not the critic who counts, Not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, Or where the doer of deeds could actually have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, Whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, Who strives valiantly, Who errs and comes short again and again – Because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; But who does actually strive to do the deeds, Who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions, Who spends himself in a worthy cause, Who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, And who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, So that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.*

Leadership in a noble cause can bring despair. But it also is the cure.

<https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/behaalotecha/leadership-beyond-despair/>

---

## "I Want to Want"

By Aharon Loschak \* © Chabad 2022

As a young teenager, Shmuel was not particularly keen on studying Talmud. But that’s what he was raised to do, and so off he went to an advanced yeshivah in Far Rockaway.

When he entered the office of the rosh yeshivah, Rabbi Shlomo Freifeld, for his admission interview, the rabbi asked him, “Do you want to learn?”

Shmuel candidly replied, “No. But I want to want to learn.”

To which Rabbi Freifeld replied, “OK, you’re in.”

## **A Disgrace, or Not?**

In Parshat Behaalotecha, G d appears to Moses and instructs him to inform the Jewish people that they are to offer the Paschal Lamb once again in the desert, as they did previously on the eve of their redemption in Egypt:

G d spoke to Moses in the Sinai Desert . . . “The children of Israel shall make the Passover sacrifice in its appointed time.”<sup>1</sup>

Rashi<sup>2</sup> points out that this verse is not in the proper chronological place, as the chapters that precede it described events that happened afterward. While this isn’t necessarily a problem, for it is well known that the Torah doesn’t read in chronological order, there must be a reason for this deviation.

Rashi explains that it’s to avoid disgracing the people. You see, the Paschal Lamb described in these verses is the only one the Jewish people offered their entire time in the desert. Though they wandered about for 40 years, through all that time they offered no other Paschal sacrifice. To cover up this disgraceful blind spot, the Torah obscures the story somewhat, sticking it in a few portions down so as not to draw attention to it.

But is there really no good reason why the Jewish people didn’t bring the Paschal sacrifice all those years?

They actually had a very good reason. In fact, one could argue they even had two reasons:<sup>3</sup>

There is a strong argument to say that the mitzvah of offering the Paschal Lamb — like many other mitzvot — only takes effect once the Jewish people settle the Land of Israel. Thus, the Jewish people abstained from offering it in the desert.<sup>4</sup> Back when the mitzvah of the Paschal Lamb was first given, the Torah clearly prohibits one who is uncircumcised from participating.<sup>5</sup> With that in mind, it’s obvious why the Jewish people didn’t offer the Korban Pesach while in the desert — many of them weren’t circumcised yet!<sup>6</sup>

Considering both these reasons, why would it be “disgraceful to Israel” to say that they didn’t offer the Paschal Lamb all their time in the desert?

## **When You Really Care**

There are technical answers one could explore in the study halls,<sup>7</sup> but I’d like to propose a simple answer: The shame here is not so much that the Jewish people didn’t bring the sacrifice, but that they didn’t want to bring it.

Consider another, similar story in our parshah, that of the Pesach Sheni, the “Second Passover.” We read the well known story of a group of people who were impure and unable to bring the Paschal sacrifice. These were the pallbearers of Joseph’s coffin, and so, their religious absence was perfectly justified. They could have said, “Alright, we’re off the hook. It’s not our fault, we’re taking one for the team. Let’s go grab a drink. Bye.”

And you know what? That would have been absolutely fine. Ethically, legally, religiously — you name it.

But they didn’t do that. They came clamoring to Moses, “Why should we lose out?”

How could they? Is it not unscrupulous, impudent even? The rules are the rules, sorry. “You missed the train, nothing more to discuss.”

Maybe. But these pious Jews didn’t take no for an answer. Why? Because they really cared. They were aware of the legal dispensation at their disposal. But they weren’t looking to discharge an obligation, rather they wanted to feel close with G d and be afforded the opportunity to realize that closeness with the glorious religious experience of the Paschal sacrifice. So they stamped their feet and demanded, “We want it!”

And guess what? G d was moved. He took notice of their passion and care and said, “Give them a second chance.” And so, the “Second Passover” was born.

When the rules pencil you out, but you really care, then change the rules!

### **At Least Want It!**

Contrast that with the rest of the Jewish community in the desert with ready explanations for their lackluster Paschal sacrifice observance. "It's not our fault! It's too dangerous to circumcise ourselves in the desert! And besides, this whole thing doesn't apply until we get to Israel, so what's the big deal?"

"You're right, you're right," one would say. "But you're also wrong. You know why? Because if you really cared about the beauty of the mitzvah, you wouldn't fall back on excuses and legalese. Bang on the table, make a tumult, at least show that you want this. Don't go down without a fight!"

That's the disgrace here. They didn't even want it.

### **Want to Want**

No one is perfect, and it's impossible to expect to check off every box in your ethical life, religious life, family life, and whatever other life you have that's worth talking about.

No one will argue with you about that. But there's a baseline that you should always expect from yourself: at the very least, maintain a healthy desire for the right thing. And if you don't want to, then want to want to. If you don't want to want, then want to want to want. You get the idea.

There's tremendous value to keeping tabs on your "desire compass." What do you really want? If it's another vacation, just to be "free," or any other form of hedonism or laziness, then we have a problem. You're not expected to transform into Moses overnight, but as much as you can, summon up the desire to do and be the right thing.

And here's the crazy thing: Even if between me and you, we both know that you'll never get there, there's still value in wanting to get there.

You can't finish the entire Talmud in your lifetime? Fine. Want to! It'll keep you a lot truer and straighter than if you don't even care to want it in the first place.

Can't yet keep kosher every day and everywhere in your life? Can't be a perfect parent, spouse, child, or friend every second of your life?

The first step is to simply want it. For real. You may never get there, but tell that silly realist inside of you that you want it anyway. Let's see who wins.<sup>8</sup>

### **FOOTNOTES:**

1. Numbers 9:1-2
2. Rashi to Numbers 9:1.
3. See Tosafot, Kiddushin 37b Hoyil Ve'Nemrah for both arguments.
4. The only reason why they did offer it this one time is because they were explicitly instructed by G d to do so.
5. Exodus 12:48.
6. See Joshua 5:4-5.
7. See Tosafot cited above.
8. Inspired by Likkutei Sichot, vol. 23. pp. 68-70.

\* Writer, editor, and Rabbi (Brooklyn, NY), and Editor of JLI's popular Torah Studies program.

[https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/5548601/jewish/I-Want-to-Want.htm](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/5548601/jewish/I-Want-to-Want.htm)

---

## **Behaalotecha: Following the Ark**

By Rabbi Moshe Wisniefsky\* © Chabad 2022

On the 20th of Iyar, 2449, G-d gave the signal and the people set out from Mount Sinai. Besides the golden Ark that housed the second set of Tablets and was transported with the rest of the Tabernacle, Moses had constructed a second ark to house the first, shattered set of Tablets. This ark was carried in front of the people, right behind G-d's cloud that led the way.

### **Following the Ark of the Torah**

*The ark of G-d's covenant traveled ahead of them:* Numbers 10:33

In all of their travels in the desert, the Jewish people were preceded by this ark and by the cloud of G-d, which led the way and cleared the path of potentially harmful animals and obstacles.

And so has it been in the long history of the Jewish people: Throughout our journeys, whenever we follow the “ark”— i.e., the light of the Torah — we have found spiritual and physical rest.

We are protected from the emotional and physical dangers of the world, enabling us to find true meaning in our existence.

\* — from *Daily Wisdom*

Gut Shabbos,

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman  
Kehot Publication Society  
291 Kingston Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11213

---

To receive the complete D'Vrai Torah package weekly by E-mail, send your request to [AfisherADS@Yahoo.com](mailto:AfisherADS@Yahoo.com). The printed copies contain only a small portion of the D'Vrai Torah. Dedication opportunities available. Authors retain all copyright privileges for their sections.

# Likutei Divrei Torah

Gleanings of Divrei Torah on Parashat Hashavuah  
via the Internet

Sponsored by Ari and Esther Jacobs  
in memory of Ari's father, Al Jacobs, a"h,  
(Alter Gavriel Dov ben Aharon Moshe Hacohen)  
whose yearzeit is 20 Sivan

Volume 28, Issue 36

Shabbat Parashat Behaalotcha

5782 B"H

## Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

### Loneliness and Faith

I have long been intrigued by one passage in this week's parsha. After a lengthy stay in the Sinai desert, the people are about to begin the second part of their journey. They are no longer travelling from but travelling to. They are no longer escaping from Egypt; they are journeying toward the Promised Land.

The Torah inserts a long preface to this story: it takes the first ten chapters of Bamidbar. The people are counted. They are gathered, tribe by tribe, around the Tabernacle, in the order in which they are going to march. Preparations are made to purify the camp. Silver trumpets are made to assemble the people and to give them the signal to move on. Then finally the journey begins.

What follows is a momentous anti-climax. First there is an unspecified complaint (Num. 11:1-3). Then we read: "The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, 'If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!'" (Num. 11:4-6).

The people seem to have forgotten that in Egypt they had been slaves, oppressed, their male children killed, and that they had cried out to be freed by God. The memory Jewish tradition has preserved of the food they ate in Egypt was the bread of affliction and the taste of bitterness, not meat and fish. As for their remark that they ate the food at no cost, it did cost them something: their liberty.

There was something monstrous about this behaviour of the people and it induced in Moses what today we would call a breakdown:

He asked the Lord, "Why have you brought this trouble on Your servant? What have I done to displease You that You put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? ... I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how You are going to treat me, please go ahead and kill me—if I have found favour in Your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin." (Num. 11:11-15)

This was the lowest point in Moses' career. The Torah does not tell us directly what was happening to him, but we can infer it from God's reply. He tells him to appoint seventy elders who would share the burden of

leadership. Hence we must deduce that Moses was suffering from lack of companionship. He had become the lonely man of faith.

He was not the only person in Tanach who felt so alone that he prayed to die. So did Elijah when Jezebel issued a warrant for his arrest and death after his confrontation with the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 19:4). So did Jeremiah when the people repeatedly failed to heed his warnings (Jer. 20:14-18). So did Jonah when God forgave the people of Nineveh, seemingly making nonsense of his warning that in forty days the city would be destroyed (Jon. 4:1-3). The Prophets felt alone and unheard. They carried a heavy burden of solitude. They felt they could not go on.

Few books explore this territory more profoundly than Psalms. Time and again we hear King David's despair:

I am worn out from my groaning.  
All night long I flood my bed with weeping  
and drench my couch with tears.  
(Ps. 6:6)

How long, Lord? Will You forget me forever?  
How long will You hide Your face from me?  
(Ps. 13:1-2)

My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?  
Why are You so far from saving me so far  
from my cries of anguish? (Ps. 22:2)

Out of the depths I cry to You, Lord... (Ps. 130:1)

And there are many more psalms in a similar vein.

Something similar can be traced in modern times. Rav Kook, when he arrived in Israel, wrote, "There is no one, young or old, with whom I can share my thoughts, who is able to comprehend my viewpoint, and this wearies me greatly." [1]

Even more candid was the late Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik. Near the beginning of his famous essay *The Lonely Man of Faith*, he writes, starkly: "I am lonely." He continues, "I am lonely because at times I feel rejected and thrust away by everybody, not excluding my most intimate friends, and the words of the psalmist, 'My father and my mother have forsaken me,' ring quite often in my ears like the plaintive cooing of the turtledove." [2] This is extraordinary language.

At times of loneliness, I have found great solace in these passages. They told me I was

not alone in feeling alone. Other people had been here before me.

Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, Jonah and King David were among the greatest spiritual leaders who ever lived. Such, though, is the psychological realism of Tanach that we are given a glimpse into their souls. They were outstanding individuals, but they were still human, not superhuman. Judaism consistently avoided one of the greatest temptations of religion: to blur the boundary between heaven and earth, turning heroes into gods or demigods. The most remarkable figures of Judaism's early history did not find their tasks easy. They never lost faith, but sometimes it was strained almost to breaking point. It is the uncompromising honesty of Tanach that makes it so compelling.

The psychological crises they experienced were understandable. They were undertaking almost impossible tasks. Moses was trying to turn a generation forged in slavery into a free and responsible people. Elijah was one of the first Prophets to criticise kings. Jeremiah had to tell the people what they did not want to hear. Jonah had to face the fact that Divine forgiveness extends even to Israel's enemies and can overturn prophecies of doom. David had to wrestle with political, military and spiritual challenges as well as an unruly personal life.

By telling us of their strife of the spirit, Tanach is conveying something of immense consequence. In their isolation, loneliness, and deep despair, these figures cried out to God "from the depths," and God answered them. He did not make their lives easier. But He did help them feel they were not alone.

Their very loneliness brought them into an unparalleled closeness to God. In our parsha, in the next chapter, God Himself defended Moses' honour against the slights of Miriam and Aaron. After wishing to die, Elijah encountered God on Mount Horeb in a "still, small voice." Jeremiah found the strength to continue to prophesy, and Jonah was given a lesson in compassion by God Himself. Separated from their contemporaries, they were united with God. They discovered the deep spirituality of solitude.

I write these words while most of the world is still in a state of almost complete lockdown because of the coronavirus pandemic. People

To sponsor an issue of Likutei Divrei Torah:  
Call Saadia Greenberg 301-649-7350  
or email: [sgreenberg@jhu.edu](mailto:sgreenberg@jhu.edu)  
<http://torah.saadia.info>

are unable to gather. Children cannot go to school. Weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs and funerals are deprived of the crowds that would normally attend them. Synagogues are closed. Mourners are unable to say Kaddish. These are unprecedented times.

Many are feeling lonely, anxious, isolated, deprived of company. To help, Natan Sharansky put out a video describing how he endured his years of loneliness in the Soviet Gulag as a prisoner of the KGB. From dozens of reports from those who endured it, including the late John McCain, solitary confinement is the most terrifying punishment of all. In the Torah, the first time the words “not good” appear are in the sentence “It is not good for man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18).

But there are uses of adversity, and consolation in loneliness. When we feel alone, we are not alone, because the great heroes of the human spirit felt this way at times – Moses, David, Elijah and Jonah. So did modern masters like Rav Kook and Rabbi Soloveitchik. It was precisely their loneliness that allowed them to develop a deeper relationship with God. Plumbing the depths, they reached the heights. They met God in the silence of the soul and felt themselves embraced.

This is not to minimise the shock of the coronavirus pandemic and its consequences. Yet we can gain courage from the many individuals, from biblical times through to more modern ones, who felt their isolation deeply but who reached out to God and found God reaching out to them.

I believe that isolation contains, within it, spiritual possibilities. We can use it to deepen our spirituality. We can read the book of Psalms, re-engaging with some of the greatest religious poetry the world has ever known. We can pray more deeply from the heart. And we can find solace in the stories of Moses and others who had moments of despair but who came through them, their faith strengthened by their intense encounter with the Divine. It is when we feel most alone that we discover that we are not alone, “for You are with me.”

[1] Igrot ha-Ra'ayah 1, 128.

[2] Joseph Dov Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith*, Doubleday, 1992, 3.

---

### **Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

---

“Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him: when you light the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the menorah.” (Numbers 8:2)

Is it permissible to study science and philosophy in the beit midrash (religious study hall)? Should a yeshiva curriculum include “secular” studies?

Our Torah portion opens with the kindling of the seven lights of the branches of the menorah, specifically ordaining that it be kindled by the kohen-priests and that it be

beaten of gold, in one piece, from “its stem until its flower” (Numbers 8:4).

At first glance, it would seem that this biblical segment is misplaced; its more natural setting would have been the portions of Teruma or Tetzaveh in the Book of Exodus, which deal with the Sanctuary, its sacred accoutrements and the task of the kohen-priests in ministering within it. Why revisit the menorah here, in the Book of Numbers?

The classical commentary by Rashi attempts to provide a response:

“Why link this segment of the menorah to the segment of the tribal princes (which concludes the previous Torah portion)? Because when Aaron saw the offerings of the princes (at the dedication of the Sanctuary), he felt ill at ease that he was not included with them in the offerings, neither he nor his tribe. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him, ‘By your life, your contribution is greater than theirs; you kindle and prepare the lights’” (Rashi, Numbers 8:2).

Why would such a task give comfort to Aaron? Since when is cleaning and kindling a candelabrum a greater honor than participating in the opening ceremony of the Sanctuary? We cannot expect to penetrate the significance of Rashi’s words (which are taken from Midrash Tanhuma 8) unless we first attempt to understand the significance of the menorah.

At first blush, the lights of the menorah symbolize Torah: “For the commandment is a candle, and Torah is light,” teaches the psalmist. But the ark (aron kodesh) is the repository of the Tablets of Stone, and that is what represents Torah in the Sanctuary.

Moreover, the menorah has a stem, or trunk, and six branches which emanate from it, each with its respective flowers – together making seven lights. And the “goblets” on the branches are “almond-shaped” (meshukadim, cf. Ex. 25:33) reminiscent of the almond tree, the first tree to blossom and thus the herald of spring. The imagery is certainly that of a tree.

If the Sanctuary symbolizes a world in which the Almighty dwells – “And they shall make for me a Sanctuary so that I may dwell among them,” a world of perfection manifesting the Divine Presence and its consummate goodness and compassion – then the Sanctuary symbolizes a return to Eden, to universal peace and harmony.

If so, the menorah may well represent the Tree of Life – after all, Torah is aptly called “a tree of life to all who grasp it” – or perhaps a tree of knowledge, especially since the ancient Greek tradition speaks of “the seven branches of wisdom,” paralleling the seven branches of the menorah (including the central stem). One may even suggest that the menorah is the amalgam of both trees together: Torah and

## **Likutei Divrei Torah**

wisdom united in one substance of beaten gold, a tree of life-giving and life-enhancing learning when the light of Torah illumines every branch of worldly wisdom.

I believe that this fundamental unity encompassing Torah and all genuine branches of wisdom was recognized clearly by the Sages of the Talmud. Indeed, from their viewpoint, all true knowledge would certainly lead to the greatest truth of all, the existence of the Creator of the Universe.

Hence the Talmud declares: “Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi said in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi in the name of bar Kappara: ‘Anyone who has the ability to understand astronomy/astrology [the major science of Babylon] and does not do so, of him does the Scripture say, ‘Upon the words of the Lord they do not gaze and upon the deeds of His hands they do not look’” (B.T. Shabbat 75a).

The Sages are saying that one cannot begin to properly appreciate the world without a grounding in the sciences.

The 12th-century philosopher-legalist Maimonides also understood the crucial inter-relationship between what is generally regarded as secular wisdom and Torah. He begins his halakhic magnum opus *Mishne Torah* with the *Laws of Torah Fundamentals*, which includes cosmogony, philosophy and science.

He concludes the fourth chapter in saying that these studies are necessary for anyone desirous of learning about God, the command to love, know and revere God. Most amazing of all, Maimonides ordains that the scholar must divide his learning time into three segments: one third for the Written Torah, one third for the Oral Torah, and one third for Gemara: and Gemara includes extracting new laws, as well as science and philosophy! Apparently, an advanced yeshiva led by Maimonides would include in its curriculum the study of science and philosophy as a means of understanding the world, human nature and God.

Let us now return to the relationship between the task of the kohen-priest in the Sanctuary. If indeed the menorah represents knowledge in its broadest sense, enlightenment in terms of the seven branches of wisdom, the tree of knowledge, then the duty of the kohen-priest becomes clear. All of knowledge, indeed the entire world, may be seen as “matter”; Torah must give “form,” direction and meaning to every aspect of the material world and the life which it breeds.

The kohen, who is mandated to “teach the Torah laws to Israel,” must prepare, clean and purify the lights of the menorah. This is the highest task of Torah and the greatest calling of the kohanim: to utilize all branches of knowledge to bring us closer to the God of love, morality and peace.

## The Person in the Parsha

### Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

#### A Candle of God Is the Soul of Man

I no longer remember which Israeli artist colony I was visiting. Perhaps Jaffa. But I will never forget the crude, almost primitive paintings, which were on exhibit. They were all very different in color, style, and size. They varied from somber dark browns and grays to tropical oranges, reds, and yellows. Some were very realistic, some impressionistic, some totally abstract. One was a large mural. But in the corner, there were postcard-sized miniatures. In every painting, a candle predominated.

The artist was obsessed with the image of the candle. A tall, slim candle, wax dripping down its side, the wick erect, the flame flickering. Somehow, each candle evoked the picture of a person.

I made a note of the artist's name, hoping that one day I would be able to afford one his works, and would then find him, but I lost the scrap of paper with his name and address long ago.

The memory of the candles bedecking his workroom walls has remained with me. As long as I can remember, I have been fascinated by candles and by their human-like quality. In my early teens, I was taught to meditate in front of a burning candle, and to associate my meditation with the biblical phrase, "A candle of God is the soul of man".

"What are some ways that human beings resemble candles?" This question was assigned to me by the old rabbi who was my first spiritual guide. In my early adolescence I was part of a group of six or seven peers who met with this rabbi once a month in a dark and, you guessed it, candlelit room.

It was our task to gaze at a burning candle and imagine the affinities between candles and men. At the end of the month, we were to report on our findings.

I never returned at the end of that month. Without that closure, it is no wonder that I still reflect, over sixty years later, on the resemblances between people and candles.

This week's Torah portion speaks of the candles that Aaron lit in the ancient Tabernacle. The Bible speaks not of the "lighting of" the candles, but of the "raising up" of the candles. The commentaries eagerly point out that it is not sufficient to kindle the candle; one must see to it that the flame will continue to burn on its own.

The candle thus becomes a metaphor for the process of teaching: parent to child, or master to disciple. It is never sufficient to merely touch the child with the flame of knowledge. Rather, one must "raise up" the flame so that it

will grow and will nurture the student for a long time. The task of the teacher is to ensure that the flame will continue to burn on its own, that knowledge will be a lifetime process.

There is another traditional Jewish saying which inspires me: "A little bit of light can dispel much darkness". The little candle teaches us how much good a single person, or even a single act, can accomplish. It is not necessary for one to try to ignite powerful floodlights. If all that one can do is light a match, that paltry act can achieve unforeseen illumination.

Finally, there is a Talmudic dictum, "A candle for one is a candle for a hundred". There are certain things in life, an item of food for example, which can only meet the needs of one person. There are other things, certain tools for example, which can only meet the needs of one person at a time. But one candle can benefit the single individual who needs illumination, and it can shed equal illumination for many others in the room. A candle for one is a candle for a hundred.

And so it is in the human realm. There are things that we can do which will benefit not only a single particular other but an entire group, an entire community, an entire world. If we teach, for example, lessons that are useful practically and that are spiritually uplifting, those lessons are not limited to who hears them. Rather, they can benefit many unseen others. Intellectual accomplishments and religious achievements are candles not just for one, but for hundreds.

I have listed but three of the infinite number of ways in which the soul of man is the candle of God. Candle lighting symbolizes the teaching process; the single act can have massive consequences; and we can affect a much wider circle than we think.

The opening verses in this week's Torah portion render the candle image so central to the Tabernacle and Temple service, because the Torah wishes us to think about the candle, to meditate on it, and to discover for ourselves the manifold analogies which lie embedded in the candle image.

"Behold the candle," the Torah exclaims. It is one of the oldest, and certainly one of the simplest, human tools. But it can be a metaphor for the power and the potential of the human soul, which is no less than the candle of God.

#### Rabbi Norman Lamm's Derashot Ledorot

##### A Definition of Anivut

Our sidra this morning introduces us, rather casually and incidentally, to one of the most important and highly celebrated virtues in the arsenal of religion – that of anivut. We read in today's portion, "And the man Moses was the most humble (anav me'od), above all the men that were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers

## Likutei Divrei Torah

12:3). Whatever may be the particular translation of the Hebrew word anav, the idea that is usually imparted is that anivut is humility, a feeling by the individual that he lacks inner worth, an appreciation that he amounts to very little. Indeed, the author of Mesilat Yesharim, one of the most renowned works on Jewish ethics in all our literature, identifies the quality of anivut with shiflut – the feeling of inner lowliness and inferiority. According to this definition, then, the Torah wants to teach each of us to see ourselves in a broader perspective, to recognize that all achievements are very trivial, attainments mere boastfulness, prestige a silly exaggeration. If Moses was an anav, if he was humble and able to deprecate himself, how much more so we lesser mortals should be humble.

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

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

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

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

Furthermore, the Talmud relates an exchange that is all but meaningless if we assume that anivut means humility. The Talmud (Sota 49a) tells us that when Rabbi Judah the Prince died the quality of anivut disappeared with him. When this was stated, the famous Rabbi

Joseph disagreed. He said, “How can you say that when Rabbi Judah died anivut vanished? Do you not know that I am still here?” In other words – I am an anav!

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

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

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

the least convenience which might make it appear as if he were usurping the dignity of the office and the station occupied by his colleague Rabba. This is, indeed, the quality of meekness – of anivut.

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

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

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

## Likutei Divrei Torah

softness, gentleness, kindliness – His meekness.

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

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

---

### **Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand** **The Seventy Elders Come Well Prepared for Their Job**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Granted, these people on Moshe's Sanhedrin were tzadikim, great people. They were moser nefesh to spare their fellow Jews from being beaten up in Egypt. But how do they qualify to sit on the Sanhedrin? They don't know enough Torah!

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

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

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

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

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

Another observation: Immediately following the investiture of the Seventy Elders, the Torah describes the Heavenly punishment that would be administered to the nation for complaining about the Mann and the lack of meat, etc. "To the people you shall say, 'Prepare yourselves

## Likutei Divrei Torah

for tomorrow (his'kadshu l'machar) and you shall eat meat for you have wept in the Ears of Hashem, saying 'Who will feed us meat? For it was better for us in Egypt!'" [Bamidbar 11:18]. Rashi comments on the words his'kadshu l'machar: Prepare yourselves for punishment.

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

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

So we have these two questions:

What does it mean "Fortunate are you who have (in the past) been appointed – she'nismanisem"?

What is "Fortunate" about the fact that they are imminently confronted with a major national tragedy?

The Tolner Rebbe offers a beautiful insight: Rashi does not call these leaders "manhigim", "nesiim", "rabbonim", "chachomim" – any of which might be appropriate and expected. Instead, he calls them "parnosim." This word also means a leader, but it has a special connotation. The Gemara relates a story [Brochos 28]. Rabban Gamliel got into an argument with Rav Yehoshua and then went to appease him, to ask for forgiveness. He came into Rav Yehoshua's house and the walls were black with soot. Rabban Gamliel was surprised. He asked, "Why are the walls of your house black? It must be that you are a blacksmith and you work with soot all day. Rav Yehoshua responded to Rabban Gamliel: "Woe to the generation that you are its 'Parnes', for you do not know about the trials and tribulations of the Talmidei Chachomim, what they do for a living, and what it takes for them to acquire sustenance."

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

This is the exact expression Rashi used by the Seventy Elders – "Parnasim" (providers). The connotation of a Parnes is a person who

participates with the people in their problems, in their trials and tribulations. He is the type of person who empathizes with the pain of the people.

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

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

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

#### Dvar Torah

##### Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

What can make Jewish suffering even worse for us? In Parshat Beha’alotecha, the Torah tells us about a tragic episode relating to ‘vehasafsuf asher bekirbo’ – the mixed multitude within our ranks (Bamidbar 11:4). The Israelite nation was divided. This led to bitterness, enmity and ultimately, tragedy.

In the ‘tochecha’ – the list of curses appearing in Parshat Bechukotai that we read just a few weeks ago, Hashem told us that a time would come when:

“Veradu bachem soneichem,” – “those who hate you will rule over you.” (Vayikra 26:17)

The Sifra, an anthology of Midrashic texts, takes two of these words out of context, removing the word ‘veradu’ and leaving “bachem soneichem,” which would translate as, “those who hate you are in your own ranks.”

Such a phenomenon can lead to bitter persecution becoming even worse. That is why the prophet Isaiah declares,

“Maharsayich umachrivayich mimeich yeitzeihu,” – “Sometimes those who lay waste to you and destroy you can come from within

your own ranks.”

I have often heard it noted that if you take an iron rod and strike it with iron, it makes an enormous noise, but if you take a wooden stick and strike it with iron, it hardly makes any noise at all.

When struck by one of your own, the consequences are more severe. That surely is a major lesson of Jewish history. And isn’t it so tragic that even though, at Mount Sinai, Hashem warned us that we could exacerbate our problems through internal strife, nonetheless we still haven’t properly learned that lesson.

However, it is Parshat Beha’alotecha which shows us the way forward. Towards the end of the parsha we are told how Miriam the Prophetess, sister of Moshe and Aaron, became gravely ill. She needed to be separated from the rest of the camp, and the entire nation of Israel, which was ready to move on, stayed behind, in order that she shouldn’t be left by herself. In their eyes, every single individual counted and they wanted to guarantee the unity of the people.

Let us therefore take this lesson to heart always. Let us, in our time, guarantee that Jewish unity will always be a top priority.

---

#### Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel Encyclopedia of Jewish Values\*

---

##### The Importance of Human Dignity

In our Parsha, Moshe had a dilemma. He was directed God to choose seventy new Zekanim-Elders. But there were 12 tribes, and great competition between the tribes (see article on Parshat Naso). Thus, Moshe understood that if he chose 6 representatives from ten tribes and five from two tribes, those two tribes would have been deeply offended and angry at Moshe. So, Moses decided to hold a lottery, distributing 72 papers to six worthy candidates from each tribe. Seventy would be marked “Zaken-elder” and two would be blank.

According to the Talmud (Sanhedrin 17a) two of the Elders chosen were Eldad and Medad. But they realized that 2 of the 72 would be “left behind” in the camp, with a blank paper. Thus, they publicly declared that their papers were blank, in order not to embarrass the two not chosen.. For that reason, God rewarded this act with a gift of prophecy for Eldad and Medad (numbers 11:26). Eldad and Medad chose to give up a position of a lifetime as an elder, rather than embarrassing 2 other Jews. How important in the scheme of things was this noble act? How important is maintaining human dignity?

The Midrash (Midrash Beraishit Rabbah 24:7) says that each time you embarrass another human being you are also diminish God Himself, the creator of that human being who is created in God’s image (Genesis 1:27). This reasoning, that embarrassing or hurting an individual is prohibited because it also hurts

## Likutei Divrei Torah

God as Creator, in no way minimizes the other reasons for this prohibition -- that it also causes pain to the other person. Judaism certainly recognizes the severity of this component of the sin as well. A person who publicly embarrasses another publicly loses his or her share in the World to Come (Avot 3:11). This Mishna is codified as law by Maimonides as part of Jewish law (Maimonides, Hilchot Chovel Umazik 3:7). Thus, while a murderer does not necessarily lose his share in the World to Come, a person guilty of embarrassing does lose his share of the World to Come, demonstrating that embarrassing another person, in a certain sense, is worse than murder. Clearly, Judaism looks upon psychological damage to a human being as even greater than physical damage (Maimonides, Hilchot Chovel Umazik 5:9). Why is the punishment for causing psychological pain more severe than that for causing physical pain, according to Jewish law? There are two reasons. First, physical pain can often heal and usually abates over time. Psychological pain of embarrassment, especially in public, can sometimes last forever, and usually takes a much longer time to heal, if it heals at all. Second, psychological pain cannot be easily assuaged, while physical pain can often be reduced or even eliminated entirely through pain killing drugs or eliminated through surgery.

How Important is Preserving Someone’s Dignity? - Both the Torah and the Rabbis went to great lengths to preserve a person’s dignity. The Talmud (Berachot 19b) says that maintaining dignity is so important, that one may even violate a negative Mitzvah for the sake of preserving dignity. Later authorities rule that a person may violate any Rabbinic (not Biblical) injunction rather than violate and individual’s dignity (Maimonides, Hilchot Klayim 10:29). Since most of Jewish law is Rabbinic, not Biblical in nature, most practices in Judaism should not be violated if fulfilling Jewish law would necessitate violating a person’s dignity. The Torah itself shows its sensitivity to the concept of not embarrassing anyone. The verse (Leviticus 6:18) says that the place that the burnt offering is brought should be the same place in the Temple that the sin offering (for accidental sins) is brought. The Talmud (Sotah 32b) explains that the Torah was trying to protect the identity of those who brought a sin offering, so that no one could tell by looking at a particular place in the Temple if the people were sinners or not.

When the offering of the First Fruits (*Bikurim*) were brought to the Temple, a number of verses had to be read along with the offering of the first fruits. Since not everyone could read, the Rabbis (Mishnah, Bikurim 3:7) instituted a rule that there should be permanent readers to read for everyone. It would not suffice merely to have readers for those who could not read since their illiteracy would be obvious. By having a permanent reader, no one would know who could and could not read, avoiding

embarrassment. This is the practice adopted today in most Ashkenazic synagogues regarding Torah reading on Shabbat. Since most Ashkenazic Jews today cannot read the Torah with the proper melody, a Torah reader a Torah reader is designated to read for everyone, even those who can read, in order to avoid embarrassment. In the same way, it was the custom to bring food to a Shiva house (house of Jewish mourning). However, the poor used to bring in plain baskets while the rich brought in wealthier baskets, which caused embarrassment to the poor. Therefore, the Rabbi (Mo'ed Katan 27a) instituted a custom that everyone must bring food in a plain basket to the house of mourning. (It is interesting to note that by the First Fruit offering, where the rich and poor baskets were of different quality, the Rabbis did not institute a similar provision making all the baskets the same. The reason for the distinction, according to the Tosafot Yom Tov, is that there is a principle in the Temple (Jerusalem Talmud, Shabbat 62b) that there is no greatness in the place of the Temple. This either signifies that since everyone is overwhelmed by the grandeur of the Temple, and, thus, the poor are not embarrassed more than others, OR since the spirituality of the Temple is so overwhelming, the poor [like others] were concerned only about spiritual matters in the Temple [like proper reading] and not concerned with the physical differences of the baskets.) The Rabbis, taking their cue from the Torah, instructed that the essence of prayer, the Amidah, be a silent prayer, so that when people enumerated their personal sins in the prayer, they could not be overheard (Sotah 32b).

Jewish law is often more sophisticated and sensitive than courts of the twenty first century. One of the five categories of payment for damages was to be for embarrassment, based on Torah verse (Deuteronomy 25:11). Even though this payment was subjective and according to strict tables of embarrassment (Deuteronomy 25:11), nevertheless, the Talmud (Bava Kama 90b) states that even the "lowest" poor person still was paid significantly for embarrassment since he is a member of the Jewish people, automatically giving him stature and dignity. In another effort to protect the identity of the poor and not embarrass them, it was a custom on the fifteenth of the month of Av for all the eligible young women to dress up, and for the eligible bachelors to meet them. Since it would be embarrassing if the poor women put on their best clothes next to the rich women who put on their best clothes, the edict was issued that all the girls would exchange their best dresses with each other, so that no man would know who was poor and who was rich, avoiding any unnecessary embarrassment (Ta'anit 31a). On a daily level, the way a person properly fulfills the mitzvah of Tzedaka (Jewish charity) depends on maintaining the dignity of the poor person. The entire eight step hierarchy of giving Tzedaka, according to Maimonides

(Maimonides, Hilchot Matnot Aniyim 10:7-14), depends on embarrassing the poor person as little as possible. That is why the highest level of Tzedaka is giving the poor person a job or a loan, not demeaning, and not a handout (demeaning)

The sensitivity in preserving a person's dignity in the synagogue can be seen in two separate instances, one which we follow in Jewish law and one we do not. If a person had a father who was known to be a terrible sinner and is an embarrassment to the son, then when the son is called up to the Torah, he should not be called up as the son of that sinner since that would compromise his dignity, but rather he should be called as the son of his grandfather (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 139:3, Ramah). However, if he had been previously called up in his father's name and now people would be sensitive to this changed name, thus calling attention to the father, and causing embarrassment, then it is preferable to call him up by his father's name. The second case involves the Torah reader. In many synagogues today, Jews are very careful to make sure every word is pronounced properly. In order to fulfill the obligation to read the Torah properly according to Maimonides (Maimonides, Hilchot Nesiat Kapayim 12:6) who states that even for a grammatical mistake, he must return to the original place of mistake and reread the verse. However, Tur (Tur, Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 142) brings another opinion of the *Manhig* who says that if a Torah reader makes a mistake, even if he mispronounced *Aaron* as *Charan* (changing the meaning entirely), the congregation does not make him go back at all because this would be undignified and embarrassing to him (calling attention to his poor reading). Although we do not follow this view today in Jewish law, this opinion indicate that the care and dignity must be given all public Jewish servants, and proper sensitivity not to hurt someone's feelings must always be taken into consideration.

Severity Of The Sin - The Talmud (Berachot 43b) proves from the Torah story about Tamar that it is better to die in a furnace than embarrass someone. Tamar was willing to die rather than reveal publicly that her father-in-law, Judah, had sexual relations with her (Genesis 38:24-25). (Of course, at the end, Tamar was able to convey to Judah who she was through a code, so that he was thus not publicly embarrassed.) This concept is further demonstrated in a Talmudic story (Ketuvot 67b) in which Mar Ukva used to secretly supply food for a poor man. One day, when the poor man sought to find out who was doing this great deed, and rather than be "caught" (which would embarrass the poor man), Mar Ukva jumped into a furnace and burned his feet. He later stated that it is preferable to be burned in a furnace than embarrass anyone publicly.

Even The Dignity Of Sinners - Judaism is so sensitive to preserve a person's dignity, that

## Likutei Divrei Torah

even when a person was a cold-blooded killer who was warned and then convicted by witnesses, the Jewish court hanged this person. Nevertheless, even this person's dignity had to be preserved in killing, as the Tora (Deuteronomy 21:22-23) forbids hanging the body for too long, as a sign of humiliation (Sanhedrin 46b). A thief is obligated to pay back four times the value of a calf stolen but five times the value of a larger animal stolen such as an ox (Exodus 21:37). When the Talmud (Bava Kama 79b) asks why the different amounts, Rabbi Yochanan says that Judaism even cares about the dignity of the thief. Since he had to carry the calf on his shoulders (an undignified act), he pays only four times the value, but as the ox could walk under its own power, the thief pays back five times the amount.

Thus, the importance of maintaining a person's dignity in Judaism cannot be overstated. One commentary (Malbim commentary to Berachot 19b) calls this quality of human dignity the most endearing and beloved quality in all of Judaism. Of all the blessings to choose in exalting another Talmud scholar, one Torah sage blessed another sage (Moed Katan 9b) by praying that "you never cause anyone else embarrassment and may you never be caused any embarrassment yourself". May all Jews follow this dictum.

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

---

### Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

---

#### Realistic Recollections and Moving Forward Rabbi Daniel Epstein

Transitions are challenging. If the Book of Numbers had a theme, this would be it. Genesis is about family, Exodus about nationhood, Leviticus is about structure and holiness and Numbers is the Children of Israel coming to terms with freedom and, ultimately, responsibility.

It is a difficult psychological and spiritual journey. As slaves in Egypt, we were not expected (or allowed) to think for ourselves. In fact, the statement in Exodus 12 of "HaChodesh haZeh Lachem Rosh Chodashim" – "This month shall be for YOU as a first of the Months" – indicates that the first mitzvah given to the Nation as a whole is about control of your OWN time.

The challenges of coming to terms with their new reality of Divine guidance, Manna from heaven, water available in a barren wilderness and so many other miracles are, all at once comforting and surreal. The People, beyond the "miracles and wonders" of the Dead Sea, the Revelation at Sinai and more, cannot fully grasp the change that they are experiencing, and they begin to gossip amongst themselves.

Tehillim (Psalms 106) gives us quite a stark insight into their difficulty in coming to terms with the sheer power of God's protection. For example:

"They rejected the desirable land and put no faith in His promise/They grumbled in their tents and disobeyed the LORD."

One of the most extraordinary declarations of their "feeling lost" is in the form of rose-coloured nostalgia (Numbers 11:4-6):

"The riffraff in their midst felt a gluttonous craving; and then the Israelites wept and said, 'If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish that we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. Now our gullets are shriveled. There is nothing at all! Nothing but this manna to look to!'"

The word that jumps out at us is "free". As if there was nothing connected to the food or the brutal slavery that existed. And furthermore, is this really true?

Abgravanel (1437-1508) comments that the "fish they ate for free in Egypt" was because of the natural conditions of the Nile and that fish was so cheap that it could be given to the workers.

But the real "freedom" they were alluding to was the freedom from having to take on the enormous responsibility of God's commandments. Subliminal in its context, but the basis of much of their discontentment.

If the Children of Israel would have been psychologically capable of the full transition – not from slavery to freedom, but from slavery to Divine service – the Book of Numbers would have played out very differently.

Nostalgia which blindsides context is what happened to Lot's Wife. She looked back inappropriately and was physically and metaphorically frozen in time and space.

We need to have the faith and trust in God to move forward, even into uncertainty, and not harp back to reminiscences of a past that never actually was.

---

#### **Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org**

#### **Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky**

#### **Genuine Tears**

Klal Yisrael goes through a significant transformation in Parshas Bahaloscha. Sefer Bamidbar begins on a high note; the Mishkan is complete with Hashem's Presence surrounding His people. Ready to soon enter Eretz Yisrael, it appears that all of the goals of Yetzias Mitzrayim are about to be achieved. At this very moment, though, something goes very drastically wrong. One downfall occurred after another, and Klal Yisroel were then destined to remain in the desert for another

forty years. Although the final blow of the sin of the meraglim does not occur until Parshas Shelach, the seeds for this tragedy are planted in this week's parsha.

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

Chazal teach us that even after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, we can still reach Hashem through the gates of tears. Requests made while crying are always indicative of a person's genuine desire, and as such are always received by Hashem. However, because of the great power of tears, one must be exceedingly careful not to abuse them. One who is brought to tears over frivolous concerns shows that the important things in his life are these trivial matters. Crying to Hashem for meat, as occurred in Parshas Bahaloscha, misuses that special vehicle to beseech Hashem for the important things in life. Weeping because of unjustified fear of entering Eretz Yisrael triggers a real need to cry for generations.

There is a very significant role that crying plays in our avodas Hashem, namely the mitzvah of blowing the chatzotzros, the silver trumpets, and the mitzvah of tekias shofar on Rosh Hashanah. In this week's parsha, we are instructed to sound the chatzotzros on the occasion of war or other national crisis. Similarly, the shofar is blown on Rosh Hashanah, which is a time of great uncertainty as our individual and collective lives are on the line. On both occasions we blow the teruah sound, which resembles the sound of weeping. The imagery of these mitzvos is clear. One who truly is in a moment of crisis and genuinely reaches out to Hashem does so by crying. Hashem very much wants our tears; He wants us to cry for the things that really matter. Connecting to Hashem from the depths of our souls as indicated by our cries is the highest form of tefillah. May Hashem help us discern properly what to ask for and what to cry for. May we save our tears for expressing our total dependence on Hashem for His mercy and not belittle our tears by using them for the trivial matters of this world.

## **Likutei Divrei Torah**

---

### **Torah.Org Dvar Torah**

### **by Rabbi Label Lam**

---

#### **...And the Rest is History**

This was the form of the Menorah: hammered work of gold, from its base to its flower it was hammered work; according to the form that HASHEM had shown Moshe, so did he construct the Menorah. (Bamidbar 8:1-4)

The Menorah needed to be hammered out of one large lump of gold. What's the message? The Menorah, more than any other vessel in the Mishkan, represents the wisdom of Torah. So why are there seven sticks? Why are the outer six lights inclined to the middle lamp? The HaEmek Davar explains, "This is so to teach us to understand and comprehend and discover within all other forms of wisdom, the wisdom of the Torah, and that is why the Menorah needed to be hammered out of one solid mass of gold to teach us that all wisdom is hewn from its source, Torah." What does it mean that all wisdoms find their source in Torah?

When I was yet an all-American Jewish boy, just out of college, feeling my way around the world like a blind person, I discovered a few large puzzle pieces, but I did not know at first what to do with them. Someone had alerted me at some seemingly random moment, in a large public setting that I was a son of Abraham. Afterwards I ran home on fire with curiosity to discover something, whatever I could about this man Abraham. There on the top shelf parked amongst thousands of books were three black English Bibles that my brothers and I received from the synagogue sisterhood upon the occasion of our Bar Mitzvos. They were the only books unread, untouched. Since I was the youngest, I could tell from the gentle geologic slope of dust on top which one was mine. I thumbed through until I saw a few sketchy lines about a 75 year-old man with a childless and barren wife starting out on a journey. They would have been voted in their high school class, least likely to make it into the 20th or the 21st century but there I was his great great etc grandchild reading about him 3700 years later. Then I flipped a few pages further and found him doing acts of extreme kindness. It reminded me of what I had heard about my own dear great grandfather. I wanted to know even more.

It drove me to do research to find out if there is anyone else who can credibly trace their national and/or personal history back that far to one individual. I felt uniquely gifted with this idea that I am a son of Abraham. I know who my great great great ... (I'll spare you) grandfather is going back 3700 years. After months of reveling in that notion, it dawned on me how wrong I was looking at it. Abraham was not just my great great grandfather going back on the highway of history 3700 years. I was his grandson. Now the question I had was simply, "How did Abraham cast his influence 3700 hundred years forward. The real local question in my gut was, "What type of parent

or grandparent would I have to be that my children or grandchildren should ever care who I was and what I lived for?" And the dirty little secret was, "Who wanted to bring children into this world? It's a polluted and dangerous place, and what songs would I teach them anyway!?"

As an American Jew kid my only tradition was that I had no tradition, so I started to write on the top of a tall legal pad with a question like, "What do I know? What lasts?" By the time I reached the bottom of the page one word was pulsing over and over again, "ONE!" I don't know where it came from. Maybe as a good Jewish kid, each night I would put my hands over my eyes and recite, "Math, English Social Studies, and Science!" Those were the subjects I would be responsible for the next day. In college we did the interdisciplinary weave, "The science of the math of history!" Then I saw one French philosopher who said, "All science is one!" Life is really one seamless reality and these subjects are just ways for us to grasp different dimensions of that oneness.

I would literally cut and paste the best of what I had written. I believe I found the answer to my question about Abraham scripted in one poetic line, "Pebbles in ponds are our ponderings, but boulders in oceans were our father's notions whose waves still rock the sea, whose waves still rock the sea." It wasn't Abraham's might or influence but his understanding of a certain big idea that projected his influence so far forward. The search for that idea led me to Torah ...and the rest is history.



BS"D

To: parsha@groups.io  
From: cshulman@gmail.com

## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON BEHAALOSCHA - 5782

[parsha@groups.io](mailto:parsha@groups.io) / [www.parsha.net](http://www.parsha.net) - in our 27th year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to [parsha+subscribe@groups.io](mailto:parsha+subscribe@groups.io) Please also copy me at [cshulman@gmail.com](mailto:cshulman@gmail.com) A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net> It is also fully searchable.

Sponsored in memory of **Chaim Yissachar z"l** ben Yechiel Zaydel Dov

Sponsored in memory of **R' Yisrael Yaakov (Halpert)** ben Dovid Chaim z"l whose first Yahrtzeit is today Friday 18 of Sivan.

Sponsored in memory of **Nachman Daniel z"l** ben Aryeh Tzvi whose first Yahrtzeit was on Lag B'Omer.

To sponsor a parsha sheet contact [cshulman@parsha.net](mailto:cshulman@parsha.net) (proceeds to tzedaka)

from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <[ryfrand@torah.org](mailto:ryfrand@torah.org)>  
to: [ravfrand@torah.org](mailto:ravfrand@torah.org)  
date: Jun 16, 2022, 5:24 PM  
subject: Rav Frand - It Was Not the Cucumbers and Onions!

**Rabbi Yissocher Frand**

**Parshas Behaaloscha**

**It Was Not the Cucumbers and Onions!**

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

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky shares a very basic idea over here (as he does in two other places in his Chumash commentary). He asks, how do Chazal know this? The simple reading of the pasuk is that they were crying over food deprivation. Chazal say that rather than crying over food, they were really crying over the newly-given arayos prohibitions. There is no indication of such in the pasuk, so how do Chazal put words into the mouths of the Jews in the Wilderness that appear nowhere in the p'shuto shel Mikra? Rav Yaakov answers that there is a concept in Torah interpretation called "PaRDeS". PaRDeS is an acronym which represents the Torah being understood on several different levels—the level of Pshat (simple interpretation), Remez (hidden allusion), Drash (homiletic exposition), and Sod (mystical interpretation). So too, he says, human beings need to be understood on different levels. When a person says something, it needs to be analyzed at the level of Pshat, at the level of Remez, at the level of Drush, and at the level of Sod. Many times, people don't really understand their own words on the subconscious level.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Ish Moshe Was More Humble Than Any Adam

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

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

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

The Gemara (Sotah 5a) says that a person should learn a lesson from his Creator. The Holy One Blessed be He abandoned all the higher peaks in the

world and had His Presence descend onto a relatively lowly mountain upon which He gave His Torah (i.e. – Mt. Sinai). The Kotzker Rebbe once asked, if the Almighty wanted to teach us humility, why didn't He give the Torah in a valley? The answer is that true humility occurs when someone has something to brag about and nevertheless remains humble. Hashem gave the Torah on a mountain. If someone is a nothing (e.g. – a valley) and does not act haughty about it, that is no big deal. However, when a person has what to be gayvedik about (for example, a mountain) and nevertheless remains humble, that is a big deal! Therefore, the Almighty gave the Torah on a mountain, but on a humble mountain. Similarly, that is why there is a principle that the Divine spirit of prophecy descends upon people who are strong, wealthy, wise, and tall. What is the reason for that? It is because the Ribono shel Olam wants people to remain humble, despite having qualities that can legitimately cause them to be proud, or even haughty.

from: Esplanade Capital <jeisenstadt@esplanadecap.com>  
subject: Rabbi Reisman's Chumash Shiur - Audio and Print Version  
**Rabbi Reisman – Parshas Behaloscha 5782**

### 1 – Topic – A Thought from Rav Hutner – Shabbos Tefillos

As we prepare for Shabbos Parshas Behaloscha. Marching B'ezer Hashem towards a summer of growth in Torah, Avodah and Yir'as Shamayim. Let me begin with the end of the Parsha. One of the Yud Gimmel Ikrim, one of the thirteen principles of Jewish faith, is taught to us at the end of Parshas Behaloscha. There we are taught that the Nevua of Moshe Rabbeinu was greater than the Nevua of any other Navi. As the Rambam says, She'ain Navi Kamohu. There is no Navi like Moshe Rabbeinu and Moshe Rabbeinu's Nevua was unique. Lo Chein Avdi Moshe B'chol Baisi Ne'eman Hu. His Nevuah was a unique Nevuah and superior to all other Neviim. This is what we have as one of the Yesodos of Emunah taught to us in the Parsha of Miriam at the end of this week's Parsha.

Where do we talk about this article of faith, where do we have this Yesod Emunah in our Davening? It is interesting, the one place and I think that it is the only place where this Yesod Emunah is mentioned in Davening is Shabbos morning in our Davening when we say in Shemoneh Esrei (שמנה עשרה). There we mention this praise from this week's Parsha of Moshe Rabbeinu (כי עבד נאמן קראת לו). The one place we mention it is by Shabbos Shacharis. Halo Davar Hu! There must be some sort of an explanation. Why is it placed in Shabbos Shacharis in particular? Rav Hutner in the Mamarei Pesach, Maimon Lamed Hei, has a wonderful insight. We know that the Tur says that there are three Shabbasos that we remember. We remember Shabbos Kodesh on three levels. One is of course is Zeicher L'ma'asei Beraishis which is the original Shabbos, the Shabbos of the seventh day of creation. The second Shabbos is the Shabbos of Mattan Torah. The Gemara says (IN Maseches Shabbos) that (דכורי עלמא בשבת ניתנה) that the Torah was given on Shabbos. That is the second aspect of Shabbos. The third of course is the Yom Shekulo Shabbos, the Shabbos L'asid Lavo, the day of rest for the whole Bri'ya when Moshiach will come. These three Shabbasos explains the Tur are mentioned one in each of the three Shabbos Tefillos, the Shabbos Shemoneh Esrei. On Friday night, on Leil Shabbos (אתה קדשת) referring to HKB"H creating Kedushas Shabbos at the Maiseh Beraishis, at creation. The second is Shabbos Shacharis when we say (שמנה עשרה במתנת חלקו). כי עבד נאמן קראת לו. כליל תפארת בראשו נתת לו. (בעמך). So that, the Shabbos of Mattan Torah. Of course the Shabbos of Mincha is (אתה אהד ושקד) (אחד ומי בעמך: ישראל גוי אחד בארץ) when the Achdus Hashem, the uniqueness of Klal Yisrael will be recognized with the (מנוחה שלמה שאתה רוצה בה). These are the three Shabbasos.

Question – On the Shabbos of Mattan Torah we say (כי עבד נאמן קראת לו). (לפניך על הר סיני). (שני לוחות אבנים הוריד בידו) were broken, they were shattered. Moshe Rabbeinu broke the two Luchos. The two Luchos that replaced them were given on Yom Kippur not on Shabbos. Why do we mention the broken Luchos in our Davening?

The answer is that we are Muvtach, we feel certain that the day will come when the energy, the potential of the Luchos Rishonos will return. When the Luchos that were broken will come back. That level of serving Hashem will return. Why do we have such a Havtacha?

Moshe Rabbeinu broke the Luchos. Hashem did not tell him to. (עשה משה). Moshe broke the Luchos. Could it be that we lost forever the Luchos because Moshe Rabbeinu chose to break them? The answer is (עבד נאמן קראת לו). We have a faith that Moshe Rabbeinu was totally given over to HKB"H. Whatever he did was done with the full and correct understanding that HKB"H even if he did not command that it be done, would want that it be done. Therefore, when we remember the Shabbos of Har Sinai and we have a Kasha as the Luchos were broken we mention as an article of faith and Emunah that what Moshe Rabbeinu did was good. What Moshe Rabbeinu did didn't prevent the eternity of Klal Yisrael from having Luchos Rishonos. Therefore, we have a right to celebrate the (שני לוחות) that came down.

Incidentally, I want to mention something else. As you know the Chailam is pronounced Oy by most Ashkenazim who Daven Nusach Sfar and is pronounced as Oh by most of the Ashkenazim who Daven Nusach Ashkenaz. Oy or Oh. So that we say when we are Davening, Moideh Ani or Modeh Ani depending on how you express it.

As you know, (שמנה עשרה במתנת חלקו) is a poem. It rhymes. Every sentence fragment rhymes with the next one. (כי עבד נאמן קראת לו). This seems to indicate that the one who wrote this pronounced Oy as Nusach Sfar does and not Oh as Nusach Ashkenaz does. Because you see if you say it as Nusach Ashkenaz you say (שמנה עשרה במתנת חלקו). כי עבד נאמן קראת לו. כליל תפארת בראשו נתת לו, (בעמך). How does Sinai rhyme with Oh. Now if you say (שמנה עשרה במתנת חלקו). כי עבד נאמן קראת לו. כליל תפארת בראשו נתת לו, (בעמך). Sinai and Oy are similar. It would seem to be an indication that at least the one who wrote this Nusach pronounced it Oy.

### 2 – Topic – A Thought for Weddings and Sheva Berachos

I would like to move on and share with you a totally separate Vort something that has absolutely no direct connection to this Parsha but this is the season B'ezer Hashem Yisbarach of weddings, of Sheva Berachos and I would like to share with you an absolutely wonderful thought I heard from a good friend who is Boruch Hashem celebrating the engagement of his daughter and shared with me the following thought. (Please forgive me as I don't remember in whose name it was said).

When a couple gets engaged and married we wish them that they should have a Keshet Shel Kayama. It is interesting that even in other languages we say they tie a knot. We use a Lashon of Keshet, of a knot. Why a language of a knot? There are two ways to connect different threads. One way is through Oreg, through weaving. Another way is through tying. Keshet. On Shabbos there is a Melacha of weaving, there is a Melacha of Koisher, of tying. Keshet Shel Kayama, tying things together permanently.

A person might think that when a couple gets married they become woven together into a single fabric. That is a beautiful expression. But it is really not that way. Even after a couple gets married they remain separate people. It is not healthy and not even possible for them to actually be one. They are not one. Each one is its own unique human being.

I remember a dear friend in Shul Alex Gross Alav Hashalom, made a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Seuda. He said then that for 49 years I tried to change my wife, tonight I decide let her be the way she is and I will be the way I am and we will live happily ever after. There is a lesson in that. Couples try to change each other. It is a mistake. Each individual is an individual. It is okay. Different people can do things differently. Even people who are married can do things differently. That is perfectly all right. We wish them a Keshet Shel Kayama. A Keshet, each string remains independent. But they are permanently connected. Not an Ariga Shel Kayama because we don't become one, it is a Keshet Shel Kayama.

Now with that understanding we understand why we have during Sheva Berachos one Bracha that ends Sameach Chosson V'Kallah and one that

ends Sameach Chosson Im HaKallah. Why? Simple. Because Chosson V'Kallah is one thing but it is Chosson Im HaKallah. They stay separate people. They remain individuals and that is the way a person is Zoche to his Hatzlacha.

The Chasam Sofer says this in Parshas Chayei Sarah. When the Shidduch of Rivka was proposed, and Lavan was asked by Eliezer, Nu what do you say? Lavan said as it says in Beraishis 24:50 (רע או-טוב). I can't tell you it is no good, I can't tell you it is good. What? You can't tell me it is good and you can't tell me it is no good? Tell me, are you for it then say it is good if you are against it say it is no good. Speak your mind. No!

Zagt the Chasam Sofer (רע או-טוב). Why? Because in Shidduchim people are looking for others that are similar to them. Oy, what a mistake. Now of course it is natural to look for people that are similar, but it doesn't add anything to the marriage. If you have two identical people and they get married, so what do you have more than you had before? No! (לא). (נוכל דבר אלקי, רע או-טוב). When you are looking for a Shidduch and you are looking for similarities it is neither good nor bad. No! (רע או-). Because he gives an example.

If a couple gets married and one likes to spend money and one doesn't like to spend money. It is a very good Shidduch when they both don't do the same thing. You know why? Because if they both like to spend money there would be no money in the house. If they both like to save money and not spend there will be plenty of money in the bank but the house would be a tense place. So G-d in his infinite mercy gave every couple a situation where the two of them, the husband and wife have different opinions on how much money to spend. I will not say which one wants to spend and which one doesn't want to spend. It varies, it might vary or may not vary. But that is not the point. The point is that they are different for a constructive reason.

Therefore, we use the expression Keshet Shel Kayama. Sameach Chosson Im HaKallah. Because the joy of a Chosson is to realize and it shouldn't take 49 years, it should happen a little sooner than that. The realization that people don't have to be identical to be happy. As a matter of fact they are better off not being exactly identical. B'ezer Hashem if each accepts the other, not only that if each one compensates for the faults of the other, in such a case there will Taka be a Keshet Shel Kayama.

So this is not only a wonderful thought and a nice Vort but a tremendous point of foundation for all relationships, for all married couples, the foundation is the idea that you are not looking for a clone of yourself, you are looking for someone who brings other benefits to the marriage, to the home, other talents to the home and with the two talents G-d willing it will work as long as you respect each other. With that absolutely wonderful thought I want to wish one and all an absolutely extraordinary Shabbos Kodesh!

---

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com  
from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>  
reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com

subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

**Home Weekly Parsha BEHALOTCHA 5782**

**Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

One of the tasks of the Priests in the Tabernacle and in the Temple was the rekindling of the great Candelabra on a daily basis. We are taught in this week's Torah reading that the Priest had to keep the flame, with which he was lighting the wicks of the lamps, next to those wicks until the lamp wick caught hold and was able to burn by itself. Over the ages, this has become the metaphor for Jewish parenting - for Jewish education itself. The parent or the teacher is responsible for the child or the student, just as the Priest was responsible for the wicks until they were lit.

The task of the parent/teacher is that the child/student will sustain himself or herself spiritually, socially, financially, and psychologically, after having been given the necessary life tools. I was a child at a time when children were considered adults by the time they reached puberty and their teenage years. However, in our more modern era childhood extends far beyond even

the teenage years. Many children and students do not achieve any sort of true independence until they are well into their twenties, and sometimes even later than that.

The question then arises: is the responsibility of the parent/teacher open ended, i.e., does it remain, no matter how long it takes for the child or the student to truly become independent? Is the parent/teacher still on the hook, so to speak, to provide aid, sustenance, financial support and means for survival? Since it is not clear to us when the flame of independence and self-sufficiency is truly able to burn on its own, there arises a situation where the obligations of the parent, the educational system and even of society generally appears to remain unlimited. This type of dependency eventually becomes self-destructive, and certainly cannot be what the Torah had in mind for the Jewish family and the Jewish society.

The goal of parenting and of education is to produce people who are well-balanced, to provide their child/student - the next generation, with the necessary tools for self-reliance and independence of thought and action. There is a window of time for such an opportunity. In my opinion, that window closes quickly as time progresses. The options remaining in life for someone in their 30s or 40s are far fewer than the options that existed when they were in their 20's.

Keeping the outside flame on the wick of the lamp of the candelabra for too long does not enhance the flame nor will it light the candelabra. Rather, it creates a situation of danger, containing too much fire, and is counterproductive in its purpose of lighting the lamps of the candelabra itself. So, too, a wise parent and/or a devoted teacher will eventually see the productivity of removing that outside fire and letting the wick burn on its own, to radiate its own life. Every human being is unique and holy. Every human being is entitled to its own lamp and light.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

---

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com  
from: Rabbi Sacks <info@rabbisacks.org>  
subject: Covenant and Conversation

**BEHA'ALOTCHA**

**Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ZTL**

**COVENANT & CONVERSATION**

From Pain to Humility

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

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

Adam I seeks success. Adam II strives for charity, love, and redemption. Adam I lives by the logic of economics - the pursuit of self-interest and maximum utility. Adam II lives by the very different logic of morality, where giving matters more than receiving, and conquering desire is more important than satisfying it. In the moral universe, success, when it leads to pride, becomes failure. Failure, when it leads to humility, can be success. In that essay, first published in 1965, Rabbi Soloveitchik wondered whether there was a place for Adam II in the America of his day, so intent was it on celebrating human powers and economic advance. Fifty years on, Brooks echoes that doubt. "We live," he says, "in a society that encourages us to think about how to have a great career but leaves many of us inarticulate about how to cultivate the inner life." [3]

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

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

"We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic!"

Num. 11:5

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

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

Num. 11:11-15

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

"Are you jealous on my behalf? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that He would rest His spirit upon them all!"

Num. 11:29

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

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

"Now the man Moses was very humble, more so than any other man on Earth."

Num. 12:3

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

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

Burning Bush was one of humility: "Who am I, to bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Ex. 3:11). It was precisely this humility that qualified him to lead. In Beha'alotecha we track the psychological process by which Moses acquires a yet deeper level of humility. Under the stress of Israel's continued recalcitrance, Moses turns inward. Listen again to what he says:

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

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

Moses had been, for too long, alone. It was not that he needed the help of others to provide the people with food. That was something God would do without the need for any human intervention. It was that he needed the company of others to end his almost unbearable isolation. As I have noted elsewhere, the Torah only twice contains the phrase, *lo tov*, "not good," once at the start of the human story when God says: "It is not good for man to be alone," (Gen. 2:18), a second time when Yitro sees Moses leading alone and says: "What you are doing is not good." (Ex. 18:17) We cannot live alone. We cannot lead alone.

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

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

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

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

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

The right response to existential pain, Brooks says, is not pleasure but holiness, by which he means, "seeing the pain as part of a moral narrative and trying to redeem something bad by turning it into something sacred, some act of sacrificial service that will put oneself in fraternity with the wider community and with eternal moral demands." This, for me, was epitomised by the parents of the three Israeli teenagers killed in the summer of 2014, who responded to their loss by creating a series of awards for those who have done most to enhance the unity of the Jewish people – turning their pain outward, and using it to help heal other wounds within the nation. Crisis, failure, loss, or pain can move us from Adam I to Adam II, from self-to other-directedness, from mastery to service, and from the vulnerability of the "I" to the humility that "reminds you that you are not the centre of the universe," but rather that "you serve a larger order." [5]

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

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

---

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com  
www.matzav.com or www.torah.org/learning/drasha  
Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

### **Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky** **Parshas Behaaloscha** **It's the Real Thing**

In this week's portion, there is a brief conversation that may get lost in the myriad activity of some of its more fascinating stories and commands. Moshe beseeches his father-in-law, Yisro, to continue travelling with the Jewish nation. "We are travelling to the place of which Hashem has said, 'I shall give to you.' Go with us, and we shall treat you well" (Numbers 10:29). Yisro replies by saying that he would like to return to his land and family. Moshe implores Yisro by telling him that he must accompany the Jews. After all, he knows the encampments and would be eyes for the Jewish people.

Whether Yisro was influenced by his son-in-law's arguments is debated by the commentaries. The Torah does not refer to the outcome. What interests me, however, is that Moshe never tells Yisro where the Jews are going. He just tells him that "we are travelling to the place of which Hashem has said, 'I shall give to you.'"

It is reminiscent of Hashem commanding Avraham to travel to Canaan with the petition "go from your land and your birthplace to the land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). But Moshe is not the Almighty, and the entire nation knew of the land where they would be going. After all, the land of Canaan was the focal point of the Exodus.

Why, then, does Moshe describe it to Yisro in a mysterious manner, not by defining its location, longitude or latitude, but rather identifying it as "the land that Hashem has promised to give us"? Would it not have been easier for Moshe to tell Yisro, "We are travelling to the Land of Canaan and we want you to accompany us"?

New York Times columnist Ralph de Toledano had a different view of the world than that of his editors. Despite protestations of the editorial board of the Times would always capitalize the words Heaven and Hell in any context.

His editors called him to task citing that heaven is only capitalized when it is a alternative for the Deity as in "Heaven help us." Moreover they insisted hell never got a capital H. De Toledano, however, insisted that any reference of those two places be spelled with a capital first letter.

"You see," the conservative columnist explained, "Heaven and Hell must always be capitalized. I want my readers to understand that Heaven and Hell are real places just like Scarsdale!"

When describing the Land of Israel, Moshe does not take a topographical approach. He delves deeper. Moshe Rabbeinu does not refer to the land of Israel merely as the land of Canaan. In telling his father-in-law where the Jews would be going, he does not offer the longitude and latitude. He does not even describe Eretz Yisrael as the land flowing with milk and honey. Moshe's only descriptive was, "the land that Hashem told us, this I shall give to you."

That statement describes Eretz Yisrael in stronger terms than agricultural potential, natural beauty, or strategic location.

It tells us that Eretz Israel is the place that Hashem promised. Any other quality is temporal. Bounty withers, beauty erodes, and natural resources

dry-up. But the promise of Hashem remains eternal. It makes us understand that like both extremes of the world-to come, the Land of Israel is real. Good Shabbos

---

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com  
from: Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff <ymkaganoff@gmail.com>  
to: [kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com](mailto:kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com)

### **By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

Question #1: Confused genealogist asks: Which?

Which Keil erech apayim should I say?

Question #2: Caring husband/son asks: Who?

My wife is due to give birth shortly, and I am saying kaddish for my father. On the days that the Torah is read, should I lead the davening ("daven before the amud"), open the aron hakodesh, or do both?

Question #3: Concerned davener asks: When?

When do I recite Berich She'mei?

Background

Prior to taking the sefer Torah out of the aron hakodesh, various prayers are recited, all of which have been part of our liturgy for many hundreds of years. This article will discuss the background and many of the halachos of these prayers.

Introduction

Reading the Torah, which is a mitzvah miderabbanan, is actually the earliest takanas chachamim that was ever made. It was instituted by Moshe Rabbeinu in his capacity as a community leader, which placed on him the responsibility of creating takanos when necessary. As a matter of fact, one of Moshe Rabbeinu's names is Avigdor, which refers to his role as the one who created fences to protect the Jewish people (see Midrash Rabbah, Vayikra 1:3). In this instance, after he saw what happened at Refidim (see Shemos 17:1), he realized that three days should not go by without an organized studying of the Torah. Therefore, he instituted that the Torah be read every Monday, Thursday and Shabbos (Bava Kamma 82a; Rambam, Hilchos Tefillah 12:1). Over a thousand years later, Ezra expanded this takkanah, including a reading on Shabbos Mincha, to provide those who did not study Torah regularly an extra boost of Torah learning. Ezra also instituted that, when the Torah is read, three people are called up, each aliyah contains at least three pesukim, and the entire reading should add at least one additional pasuk, for a minimum of ten pesukim. (There is one exception to this last rule -- on Purim, Ashkenazim read the story of Vayavo Amaleik that is exactly nine pesukim. This is because the topics both before and after this section have nothing to do with the Amaleik incident, and it is therefore better to keep the reading focused rather than add an extra pasuk. Ashkenazim read just the nine pesukim, whereas Sefardim repeat one of the pesukim, in order to extend the reading to ten pesukim.)

Keil erech apayim

On weekdays on which tachanun is recited, prior to removing the sefer Torah we say a short prayer that begins with the words, Keil erech apayim, "Hashem, You who are slow to anger and are full of kindness and truth, do not chastise us in Your anger! Hashem, have mercy on Your people (Israel), and save us (hoshi'einu) from all evil! We have sinned to You, our Master; forgive us, in keeping with Your tremendous compassion, O, Hashem." The Keil erech apayim prayer should be said standing, because it includes a brief viduy, confession, and halacha requires that viduy be recited standing (Magen Avraham, introduction to Orach Chayim 134).

Am I a German or a Pole?

In virtually every siddur I have seen, two slightly variant texts are cited, the one I quoted above, which is usually labeled the "German custom" or "German version," and a slightly variant version described as the "Polish version." Some siddurim provide greater detail, presenting the "first" version as the "custom of western Germany, Bohemia and parts of 'lesser' Poland," and the "second" version, as the "custom of 'greater' Poland." In one siddur, I saw the following, even more detailed explanation, describing the "first" version as the custom of the areas in and near "western Germany, Prague, Lublin and Cracow," and the second text for the areas around "Posen and Warsaw."

But, if your family came from somewhere other than Germany, the Czech Republic (where Bohemia and Prague are located) or Poland, which one do you recite? Many people are bothered by this question, myself included, since my father was born in Ukraine, as were all my grandparents and greatgrandparents on his side of the family, and my mother's side of the family is from Lithuania.

Eidot hamizrah

A more intriguing question is, that both versions of this prayer are in Eidot Hamizrah siddurim, and their custom is to recite both, "German" version first. I found this or a similar custom mentioned in several rishonim from very different times and places -- in

the Machzor Vitri, of 11th century France; the Kol Bo, of 13th century Provence, and the

Avudraham, of 14th century Spain. Some rishonim record a custom of reciting both versions, but having the chazzan recite the first and the community respond with the second (Machzor Vitri). According to either of these approaches, the question is why recite both prayers, since they are almost identical.

The answer given by the Machzor Vitri is that the first version uses the word hoshi'einu, whereas the second uses the word hatzileinu. Both of these words translate into English as "Save us." However, their meaning is not the same; hoshi'einu implies a permanent salvation, whereas hatzileinu is used for a solution to a short-term problem. The Machzor Vitri, therefore, explains that the first prayer is that Hashem end our galus. After requesting this, we then ask that, in the interim, He save us from our temporary tzoros, while we are still in galus.

#### Ancient prayer

The facts that these prayers are in both Ashkenazic and Eidot Hamizrah siddurim, and that rishonim of very distant places and eras are familiar with two different versions, indicate that these prayers date back earlier, presumably at least to the era of the ge'onim. Clearly, although our siddur refers to a "German" custom and a "Polish" one, both versions were known before a Jewish community existed in Poland – earlier than when the words "Polish" custom could mean anything associated with Jews!

#### Atah hor'eisa

In some communities, reading of the Torah was introduced by reciting various pesukim of Tanach, the first of which is Atah hor'eisa loda'as ki Hashem Hu Ha'Elokim, ein od milevado, "You are the ones who have been shown to know that Hashem is The G-d, and there is nothing else besides Him" (Devarim 4:35). The practice among Ashkenazim is to recite the pesukim beginning with Atah hor'eisa as an introduction to kerias haTorah only on Simchas Torah. However, in Eidot Hamizrah practice, Atah hor'eisa is recited every Shabbos, just before the aron is opened, and a shortened version is recited any time that no tchanun is recited. (Essentially, these pesukim are said instead of Keil erech apayim, which is recited only on days that tchanun is said.) According to the Ben Ish Chai, as many pesukim should be recited as people who will be called to the Torah that day: On Shabbos, the pasuk Atah hor'eisa is the first of eight pesukim; on Yom Tov, the first two pesukim, including the pasuk of Atah hor'eisa, are omitted (Ben Ish Chai year II, parshas Tolados, #15); on weekdays when no tchanun is recited, only three pesukim are recited, beginning with the pasuk, yehi Hashem Elokeinu imanu ka'asher hayah im avoseinu, al ya'az'veinu ve'al yi'tesheinu (Melachim I 8:57). The Ben Ish Chai emphasizes that, apparently because of a kabbalistic reason, it is incorrect to recite more pesukim than the number of people who will be called to the Torah that day. Most, but not all, Eidot Hamizrah communities follow this approach today.

#### Opening the aron

Having completed the recital of either Keil erech apayim, Atah hor'eisa, neither or both, the aron hakodesh is opened. The poskim rule that the aron hakodesh should not be opened by the chazzan, but by a different person, who also removes the sefer Torah. (In some minhagim this is divided between two honorees, one who opens the aron hakodesh and one who takes out the sefer Torah.) The chazzan himself should not remove the sefer Torah from the aron hakodesh because it is a kavod for the sefer Torah that someone else remove it from the aron and hand it to the chazzan. The honor is that the extra people involved create more pomp and ceremony with which to honor the reading of the Torah (Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Chayim 282:1, based on Mishnah, Yoma 68b).

#### The opener

A minhag has developed recently that the husband of a woman who is in the ninth month of pregnancy should open the aron hakodesh to take out the sefer Torah and close it after kerias haTorah. The idea that opening the aron is a segulah for a smooth and easy opening of the womb is recorded in kabbalistic authorities of the Eidot Hamizrah (Chida in Moreh Be'Etzba 3:90; Rav Chayim Falagi in Sefer Chayim 1:5). To the best of my knowledge, this custom was unheard of among Ashkenazim until the last forty or so years. So, as I see it, this custom has value in that it ameliorates a husband's feelings since he is now doing something to assist his poor wife when she goes through highly uncomfortable contractions. And, it also makes his wife feel that he did something for her, so there is a sholom bayis benefit.

#### Caring husband

At this point, let us address the second of our opening questions:

"My wife is due to give birth shortly, and I am saying kaddish for my father. On the days that the Torah is read, should I lead the davening ("daven before the amud"), open the aron hakodesh, or do both?"

Let me explain the question being asked. Well-established practice is that an aveil davens before the amud on days other than Shabbos or Yom Tov, as a merit for his late parent. (There are many variant practices concerning which days are considered a "Yom Tov" for this purpose; discussion of this issue will be left for another time.)

Based on the above information, our very caring husband/son is asking: since he should not take both honors of leading the services and of opening the aron hakodesh, which honor should he take? Or perhaps he should do both?

In my opinion, he should lead the services, which is a custom going back hundreds of years, whereas the custom of taking the sefer Torah out of the aron hakodesh is mentioned much more recently, and was not even practiced by Ashkenazim until a few years ago. And, as we mentioned in the name of the Aruch Hashulchan, one person should not both lead the services and take the sefer Torah out of the aron hakodesh. Berich She'mei

At this point, we can discuss the third of our opening questions: "When do I recite Berich She'mei?"

The Aramaic words of Berich She'mei are a prayer that is recorded in the Zohar (parshas Vayakheil). When we trace back the customs on which days this prayer is recited, we find many different practices:

1. Recite it only before Shabbos Mincha reading.
2. Recite it on Shabbos at both morning and Mincha readings.
3. Recite it not only on Shabbos, but also on Yom Tov.
4. Recite it on Shabbos, Yom Tov and Rosh Chodesh, but not on weekdays or fast days (other than Yom Kippur).
5. Recite it whenever the Torah is read.
6. A completely opposite custom -- never recite it at all.

Allow me to explain the origins of these various practices.

#### 1. Only Shabbos Mincha

Although I saw different sources mention this practice, I did not see any explanation. I can humbly suggest two possible reasons for this custom. One is that, as we explained above, the kerias hatorah of Shabbos Mincha was not part of the original takkanah of Moshe, but was established subsequently to provide those who did not learn Torah during the week the opportunity to study some extra Torah while they were in shul for davening. Thus, this kerias hatorah represents the entire Jewish people studying Torah together, creating a level of kedusha that justifies recital of the beautiful prayer of Berich She'mei.

Another possible explanation: Shabbos has three levels of sanctity, Friday evening, Shabbos morning and Shabbos afternoon. There are several ramifications of these different levels, including that the central part of the three shemoneh esrei tefilos of Shabbos -- Maariv, Shacharis and Mincha -- are three completely different prayers (as opposed to all other days when the main parts of these three tefilos are identical). These three tefilos represent three historical Shabbosos and their spiritual ramifications. Maariv, or, more accurately, the Friday evening part of Shabbos, represents the Shabbos of creation, Shabbos morning represents the Shabbos of the giving of the Torah, and Shabbos afternoon represents the future Shabbos of the post-redemption world. These three aspects are also manifest in the three meals of Shabbos, and, for this reason, seudah shelishis is traditionally approached as having the pinnacle of spirituality. This would explain that Shabbos Mincha is the time that the prayer, Berich She'mei, addresses.

#### 2. Only Shabbos, but both morning and Mincha

This approach is quoted in the name of the Arizal -- presumably, it has to do with a certain level of kedusha that exists only on Shabbos. (See also Magen Avraham, introduction to 282).

#### 3. Only Shabbos and Yom Tov

and

#### 4. Only Shabbos, Yom Tov and Rosh Chodesh

These two customs are both based on the concept that Berich She'mei should not be recited on a weekday, but is meant for a day when there is special sanctity. This is based on the words in Berich She'mei, Berich kistrach, "May Your crown be blessed." In kabbalistic concepts, we praise Hashem in this special way only on Shabbos and Yomim Tovim, and that is why the kedusha in nusach Sefard for Musaf begins with the words keser yitnu, which refers to Hashem's crown.

I saw this practice quoted in the name of the Arizal and the Chida, and most Eidot Hamizrah siddurim mention Berich She'mei prior to the Shabbos and Yom Tov readings, but not prior to weekday reading.

Many authorities note that those who follow this practice regarding Berich She'mei should also recite it on Rosh Chodesh, since they recite the words keser yitnu also as part of the kedusha of Rosh Chodesh (Ben Ish Chai year II, parshas Tolados, #15).

#### 5. Always

This is the common practice among Ashkenazim and in nusach Sefard (Elyah Rabbah, 141; Be'er Heiteiv, Pri Megadim, Machatzis Hashekel, Mishnah Berurah; all at beginning of 282).

The Seder Hayom, an early Sefardic kabbalist, mentions the laws of reciting Berich She'mei when he discusses the laws of reading the Torah on weekdays. From this, the Elyah Rabbah (134:4) suggests that the Seder Hayom holds that Berich She'mei is recited whenever the sefer Torah is taken out of the aron hakodesh. In other words, he

disagrees with the approach followed by the other mekubalim mentioned, the Arizal and the Chida.

6. Not at all

In some communities in Germany, the practice was not to recite Berich She'mei. There appears to be a historical reason why not, based on the words of the prayer Berich She'mei itself, which states, lo al bar elohin samichna, "We do not rely on the 'sons of G-d.'" Apparently, some of Shabsai Tzvi's proponents claimed that the term "sons of G-d" alluded to Shabsai Tzvi, and, for this reason, it was decided to omit the entire prayer. (Those who recite Berich She'mei assume that this term bar elohin refers to angels.) Several sources quote this position in the name of the Noda BeYehudah, although I have been unable to find any place where he wrote this. It is certain that the Noda BeYehudah was strongly opposed to the introduction of kabbalistic ideas into our tefilos; for example, he attacks very stridently the custom, which he refers to as "recently introduced and very wrong," of reciting lesheim yichud prior to fulfilling mitzvos (Shu't Noda BeYehudah Orach Chayim 2:107; Yoreh Deah #93).

When to say it?

When is the best time to recite Berich She'mei? In a teshuvah on this subject, Rav Moshe Feinstein notes that the words of the Zohar describing this beautiful prayer do not mention specifically whether it should be said before the Torah is removed from the aron hakodesh or afterward. However, the Shaar Efrayim, authored by Rav Efrayim Zalman Margolios, one of the great early nineteenth-century poskim, rules that the optimal time to recite Berich She'mei is after the sefer Torah has been removed from the aron hakodesh, and this is the conclusion that Rav Moshe reaches. In other words, it is preferred that the person being honored with taking the sefer Torah out of the aron hakodesh should do so as soon as practical, and then hold the sefer Torah while Berich She'mei is recited. Someone who was unable to recite Berich She'mei then can still say it until the sefer Torah is opened to lein (Seder Hayom, quoted by Elyah Rabbah 134:4).

This article will be continued next week.

---

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/>

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites

**Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz**

**Beha'alotcha 5782 - What was the Ark of the Covenant Doing in a War Zone?**

In this week's parasha, Beha'alotcha, we read a very mysterious verse that describes the journey of the Ark of the Covenant – the ark which contained the two tablets given on Mount Sinai – before the nation. From the Torah, it seems that the journey involved a war with an enemy, and the Ark was taken to war at the head of the fighting army. The Torah quotes what Moses would say when the Ark would go out to war ahead of the army:

*So it was, whenever the ark set out, Moses would say, Arise, O Lord, may Your enemies be scattered and may those who hate You flee from You. (Numbers 10, 35)*

The ark setting out to war before the army is also described in the book of Samuel where we read about a war between the tribes of Israel and the Philistines, the inhabitants of the land before the children of Israel entered. The book of Samuel tells us about this war in a place called Afek (near which there is now a city called Rosh Ha'ayin). In the first battle of the war, the Philistines were winning and about four-thousand soldiers from among the children of Israel fell in battle. After the battle, the elders of the Jewish nation consulted with one another and decided to bring the Ark of the Covenant to the battlefield, saying: "Let us take to us from Shiloh the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, and He will come in our midst, and save us from the hand of our enemies" (Samuel 1 4, 3).

When the Ark was brought into the camp, "all Israel shouted a great shout" (Ibid Ibid, 5). The nation was certain that the presence of the Ark would bring them victory. The Philistines also saw the presence of the Ark as a determining factor against them and called out anxiously, "Woe is unto us! Who will save us from the hand of this mighty God?!" (Ibid Ibid, 8). But despite this, in the second round of battles, the Philistines won again and the losses to Israel were great – thirty thousand soldiers fell in battle! And if that wasn't enough, the Ark of the Covenant itself was taken into captivity by the Philistines!

This turn of events doesn't easily mesh with the verses we started with. From this week's parasha, it seemed that the presence of the Ark would bring salvation to the nation and victory over its enemies. But the book of Samuel tells us about a crushing defeat that was not prevented by the presence of the Ark.

Some of the biblical commentators who dealt with this question focused on an important principle that arises from looking at these two stories. The presence of the Ark in the war is not a magical means with power to bring about victory. The role of the Ark in war is that the army carrying it will be influenced by it, that the army camp will be a holy place with the values and commandments of the Torah. When the nation is not influenced by the Ark, it becomes nothing more than pieces of wood coated in gold and the tablets become nothing more than pieces of stone etched with letters. The power of the Ark of the Covenant lies in people drawing from it the values of Torah, morality, and derech erez.

The Ark of the Covenant taken to war as described in the book of Samuel had no influence on the nation. They continued to worship idols, to practice incest and other social immoralities. They wanted to use the Ark as a magical means, and that is not its purpose. The purpose of the Ark is to cause a person to transcend and repair his ways, and only then does the Ark bring about victory in war.

We no longer have the Ark of the Covenant, but this discussion still applies to our lives. The mezuzah is an example – that same piece of parchment with texts from the Torah that is covered and attached to our doorposts. Many see the mezuzah as a means of protecting the home. There are sources for this in the literature of Chazal. But we must remember that that is not its purpose. The Rambam, Maimonides, writes about this in his typical decisiveness:

*They, however, who write names of angels, holy names, a Biblical text...within the Mezuzah, are among those who have no portion in the world to come. For these fools not only fail to fulfill the commandment but they treat an important precept that expresses the Unity of God, the love of Him, and His worship, as if it were an amulet to promote their own personal interests... (Mishneh Torah, Mezuzah 5)*

We put a mezuzah at the entrance to our home in order to remember the values written in it: the Unity of God, the love of Him, and keeping His commandments. If we remember that, the mezuzah indeed protects us from harm. But if we see the mezuzah as some sort of magical amulet, it loses its power. The Torah and commandments are not magical means of attaining victory and success. They are meant to influence us and elevate us from the quagmire of materialism and egocentrism to lofty peaks of spirituality and morality.

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

---

from: Rabbi Chanan Morrison <chanan@ravkooktorah.org>

to: rav-kook-list@googlegroups.com

subject: [Rav Kook Torah]

**Rav Kook Torah**

**Shlach: Holiness of Earth and Air**

**Rabbi Chanan Morrison**

It is probably the most commonly asked question about the account of the Twelve Spies: how could the leaders of the Israelite tribes, who knew God had promised to bring the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, fail so spectacularly in their mission? Why did they return with an evil report of the Land and frighten the people?

Furthermore, do the sections that follow - the Temple wine libations and the mitzvah of Tzitzit - have any connection to the story of the Spies?

The Land's Physical and Spiritual Powers

The psalmist writes that, since the Israelites rejected the Land of Israel, they were punished with exile and dispersion to other lands:

"They rejected the desirable land, and put no faith in His promise. They grumbled in their tents and disobeyed God. So He raised His hand in oath to

make them fall in the wilderness, to disperse their descendants among the nations and scatter them throughout the lands.” (Psalms 106:24-27)  
Why is the Land of Israel so special? Does it not say that “the whole earth is filled with His glory” (Isaiah 6:3)?

According to Rabbi Yochanan, the Flood in the time of Noah did not reach the Land of Israel (Zevachim 113a). The Land of Israel was not damaged by the waters of the Flood, but retained its pristine powers from the time of the world’s creation. Thus the spies encountered the ancient Nephilim, still roaming the Land.

Eretz Yisrael also retained its original spiritual qualities. It is thus the land of prophecy (Kuzari 2:14). The Talmud teaches that Ezekiel could only prophesy in Babylonia because he had already begun that prophecy in the Land of Israel (Moed Katan 25a).

God’s glory fills the entire universe, but He restricted His Shechinah to Jerusalem and the Holy of Holies. God similarly chose one people out of all the nations. There is a parallel between the special sanctity of the Land of Israel and that of the Jewish people. Just as the Jewish people are the ‘heart’ of all peoples,<sup>1</sup> so, too, the Land of Israel is the ‘soul’ of all lands.

Holiness of Earth and Air

The Sages ruled that all lands outside the Land of Israel are ritually impure. At first they ruled that the earth from other lands is impure. Then they ruled that even the air is impure (Shabbat 15).

The Land of Israel, by contrast, is blessed with two qualities of holiness: holiness of its earth, and holiness of its air. What does this mean?

The Land’s “holiness of earth” is revealed in the special mitzvot that can only be performed in the Land of Israel: tithes of agricultural produce, first-fruits, the Sabbatical year, and so on. This is a holiness that manifests itself with practical acts in the physical realm.

“Holiness of air,” on the other hand, refers to the Land’s special capacity for Divine inspiration, prophecy, and the Shechinah’s presence in the Temple. Moses sought to gain both aspects of holiness. He was the greatest of all prophets, but he still pleaded with God to be allowed to enter the Land and experience the holiness of its mitzvot. “Let me cross over and see the good land” (Deut. 3:25). The Spies, on the other hand, thought that “holiness of air” is sufficient for the nation; this holiness is more spiritual and can accompany the Jewish people in any location. They sinned by rejecting the importance of the Land’s practical mitzvot - its “earth-holiness.”

After the sin of the Spies, God accepted Moses’ prayers. “I have forgiven as you asked. However,” God added, “as I live, God’s glory will fill all the world” (Num. 14:20-21). Since you have rejected the concentration of holiness in the Land of Israel and the Jewish people, God’s glory will spread throughout the world. The Jewish people will be scattered to other lands; and due to their dispersion, “many peoples will attach themselves to God” (Zech. 2:15). As the Sages taught, the function of exile is to enable converts to join the Jewish people (Pesachim 87b).

However, as Zechariah’s prophecy continues, וְבָחַר עוֹד בִּירוּשָׁלַם - “He will choose Jerusalem once more” (2:16). The Jewish people and those who join them will witness God’s selection of Jerusalem. They will reconnect with the Land of Israel and its special holiness. The sin of the Spies will be forgiven, and the exile of Israel will come to an end.

Combining Both Forms of Holiness

We can identify these two aspects of holiness in the mitzvot mentioned in the sections that follow. The Temple offerings are called “My bread” (Num. 28:2). They are the staple, the tangible part of the offerings, corresponding to the “earth-holiness” of the Land.

But that is not enough. The Torah commands that wine libations (nesachim) must accompany the offerings, adding an additional level of holiness, one of joy and higher spirit. The libations correspond to the Land’s “air-holiness.” Our Temple offerings must include both aspects of holiness.

The mitzvah of Tzitzit also has two parts. There are white strings, corresponding to the “earth-holiness” of the Land. And there is a string of Tekhelet-blue, corresponding to the holiness of the air and the sky. We are commanded to combine both forms of holiness in our lives, the practical and

the atmospheric: “They shall include a twist of sky-blue wool in the corner tassels” (Num. 15:38).

(Adapted from *Shemu’ot HaRe’iyah II*, pp. 199-202).

1 Kuzari 2:36. “The metaphor of the heart and body stresses the centrality of the Jewish people in the cosmic plan. However, it equally emphasizes an organic, holistic view of the world... the heart itself would be rendered meaningless without its constant interaction with the other organs, despite its functional importance” (Prof. Shalom Rosenberg, ‘In the Footsteps of the Kuzari’)

Copyright © 2022 Rav Kook Torah

---

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

[http://ohr.edu/this\\_week/insights\\_into\\_halacha/](http://ohr.edu/this_week/insights_into_halacha/)

Ohr Somayach Insights into Halacha Rabbi Yehuda Spitz    Ohr Somayach Insights into Halacha

**For the week ending 13 June 2020 / 21 Sivan 5780**

**Weighty Waiting Options**

**Rabbi Yehuda Spitz**

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

Double Agents

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

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

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

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

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

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

In any case, regarding the general separation necessary between meat and milk, the Gemara itself does not inform us what the mandated waiting period is. Rather, it gives us several guideposts that the Rishonim use to set the

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

#### **Six Hours**

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

#### **Five Hours and Change**

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

#### **Four Hours**

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

#### **One Hour**

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

#### **Three Hours**

Interestingly, and shocking to some, the common German custom of waiting three hours does not seem to have an explicit halachic source. [27] In fact, one who delves into the sefarim of great Rabbanim who served throughout Germany, from Rav Yonason Eibeshutz to Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, will find that they all recommended keeping the full six hours! Yet, there are several theories explaining how such a widespread custom came about: [28] One, by the Mizmor L'Dovid, is that it is possibly based on the Pri Chodosh's opinion of sha'os zmanios. He posits that if in the middle of winter, three hours is deemed sufficient waiting time, it stands to reason that it should suffice year-round as well.

Another hypothesis, by Rav Binyomin Hamburger, author of Shorshei Minhag Ashkenaz and head of Machon Moreshe Ashkenaz, is that their

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

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

#### **Bentch and Go**

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

#### **A Day Away**

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

#### **Just Sleep on It**

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

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

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

Other Poskim, including the Debreciner Rav (Shu"t Ba'er Moshe vol. 8:36, 5), Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (cited in Piskei Halachos pg. 53:4-5), and Rav Moshe Sternbuch (Shu"t Teshuvos V'Hanhagos vol. 1:434) prefer a staggered approach.

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

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

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

[1] See Taanis (26b and 29a), that this, the first of five tragedies, occurred on Tisha B'Av.  
 [2] Calev's father's real name was actually Chetzron. See Divrei Hayamim I (Ch. 2:18) and Sota (11b).  
 [3] Bamidbar (Parashas Shlach, Ch. 14:27).  
 [4] Megilla (23b), Brachos (21b), and Sanhedrin (74b). See Rashi al HaTorah (ad loc. s.v. l'eidah).  
 [5] Rambam (Hilchos Tefilla Ch. 8:5), Tur and Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 55:1 and 69:1), Aruch Hashulchan (O.C. 55:6), and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (15:1). Many authorities cite this as the source for this law, including the Bach (O.C.55:1), Taz (ad loc. 1), Levushei Srad (ad loc. 1), Chida (Birkei Yosef ad loc. 3), Shulchan Aruch Harav (ad loc. 2), Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 2), and Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. 6).  
 [6] For a full treatment of the Meraglim and their intentions, see relevant commentaries to Parashas Shlach, as well as Rabbi Moshe M. Eisemann's excellent "Tear Drenched Nights - Tish'ah B'Av: The Tragic Legacy of the Meraglim."  
 [7] Another interesting example of this is a potential halacha we glean from Bilaam. The Gemara (Brachos 7a) explains that Bilaam knew the exact millisecond each day that Hashem "gets angry" and knew how to properly curse during that time. Tosafos (ad loc. s.v. she'ilmalei and Avodah Zarah 4b s.v. rega) asks what type of curse was possible to utter in such a limited time frame (a fraction of a second!) and gives two answers: 1) the word "kaleim, destroy them" 2) once Bilaam started his curse in that exact time frame, he "locked it in" and can continue as long as it takes, since it is all considered in that exact time. The Aruch Hashulchan (O.C. 110:5), the Butchatcher Rav (Eishel Avraham O.C. 104), and the Yid Hakadosh of Peshicha (cited by the Kozoglover Gaon in his Shu"t Eretz Tzvi, end 121 s.v. v'annam), take the second approach a step further and apply this idea to Tefilla B'Zman. As long as one starts his Tefilla before the Sof Zman, it is considered that he "made the zman", even if the majority of his Tefilla actually took place after the Sof Zman. Not everyone agrees with this, though. Indeed, many Poskim, including the Magen Avraham (O.C. 89:4 and 124:4), Pri Megadim (O.C. 89, E.A. 4 and 110, E.A. 1; note however, that in the beginning of O.C. 620, in his Eishel Avraham commentary, he accepts this understanding regarding Mussaf on Yom Kippur prior to the seventh hour), and Mishnah Berurah (58:5 and 89: end 5), are makpid that one must finish his Tefilla before the Sof Zman. Nevertheless, a similar logic (based on Bilaam) is presented by the Machatzis Hashekel (O.C. 6: end 6), quoting the Beis Yaakov (Shu"t 127) in the name of the Arizal regarding Tefillas HaTzibbur. [There is precedent to this understanding in the Yerushalmi (Brachos Ch. 4, Halacha 1 and Taanis Ch. 4, Halacha 1). See also Gilyonei HaShas (Brachos 54) and She'arim Metzuyanin B'Halacha (vol. 1, 18:2 and Kuntress Acharon 2). Indeed, on a practical level, although the Pri Megadim (O.C. 109, E.A. 2) and seemingly followed by the Mishnah Berurah (66:35 and 109, Biur Halacha s.v. hanichnas; however, see 14 ad loc.), implies that one is only considered to have davened Tefilla B'Tzibbur if he starts his Shemoneh Esrei at the exact same time as the Chazan and congregation [see Brachos 21b, and Tur and Shulchan Aruch and main commentaries to O.C. 109:1), nonetheless, numerous contemporary Poskim, including Rav Moshe Feinstein (Shu"t Igros Moshe, O.C. vol. 3:4 s.v. uvadav echad), the Chazon Ish (cited in Orchos Rabbeinu, new edition, vol. 1, pg. 118:55), Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Halichos Shlomo, Tefilla, Ch. 8:7), and Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (cited in Avnei Yashpei on Tefilla, Ch. 6, footnote 22), maintain that if one starts soon after, while the Tzibbur is still davening Shemoneh Esrei (preferably while still in the first bracha), one still "made" Tefilla B'Tzibbur. See also Chayei Adam (vol. 1:19, 8), Aruch Hashulchan (O.C. 109:5 and 12), Shu"t Ba'er Moshe (vol. 4:11), Shu"t B'tzeil Hachochma (vol. 4:3), Shu"t Yabia Omer (vol. 2, O.C. 7; who rules that the same applies in reverse, that if one starts his Shemoneh Esrei before the Tzibbur and continues along with them, it is still considered Tefilla B'Tzibbur), and Ishai Yisrael (Ch. 12:8).] If such design worked for one as despicable and reprehensible as Bilaam to enable him to curse us, how much more so should it work for us regarding Tefilla B'Tzibbur which is an eis ratzon!

[8] An interesting hanhaga we learn from Bilaam is that an 'Adam Chashuv' should not travel without having two assistants. See Rashi (Bamidbar Ch. 22:22 s.v. ushnei), quoting the Midrash Tanchuma (Parashas Balak 8). An additional example of a halacha gleaned from the wicked actions of Bilaam is that of Tzaar Baalei Chaim, causing living creatures unnecessary pain. Although the Gemara (Bava Metzia 32a-b) debated whether this halacha is Deoraysa or Derabbanan, according to most authorities, including the Rambam (Hilchos Rotzeach Ch. 13:13; see also Kessef Mishneh ad loc. 9), Rif (Bava Metzia 17b), Rosh (ad loc. 30), Mordechai (end Masesech Shabbos, 448), Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzva 451, end s.v. kasav), Tur (C.M. 272:11), Rema (ad loc. 9), Bach (ad loc. 5), Vilna Gaon (Biur HaGra"m ad loc. 11), SM"A (ad loc. 15), Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (191:1), and Aruch Hashulchan (C.M. 272:2), as well as the mashmaos of the Gemara Shabbos (128b; see also Rashi ad loc. s.v. tzaar, as well as Chiddushai Chasam Sofer on Bava Metzia 32), and Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 305:18; as otherwise dismounting from an animal on Shabbos is an Issur Derabbanan, and he nonetheless rules that Tzaar Baalei Chaim supercedes it, implying that it is Deoraysa; thanks are due to Rav Yirmiyohu Kaganoff for pointing this out), Tzaar Baalei Chaim is indeed Deoraysa. According to the Midrash Hagadol (Parashas Balak 22:32), Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim vol. 3: end Ch. 17), and Sefer Chassidim (666) this can be gleaned from Bilaam's actions of hitting his donkey. In fact, they maintain that since Bilaam remarked that if he had a sword in his hand he would have killed his donkey on the spot, that is why he eventually was slain specifically by sword! Thanks are due to Rabbi Shimon Black of the KLBD for pointing out several of these sources.

[9] Bamidbar (Parashas Beha'aloscha Ch. 11).

[10] Ad loc. verse 33.

[11] Gemara Chullin 105a, statements of Rav Chisda.

[12] There are however, other opinions. For example, the Kreisi U'Pleisi (89, Pleisi 3) and Chochmas Adam (40:13) posit that the waiting period is actually dependent on digestion.

[13] Rambam (Hilchos Maachalos Assuros Ch. 9:28).

[14] Rashi, in his glosses to Gemara Chullin (105a s.v. assur). However, Rashi would still agree that any meat found in the oral cavity even after six hours must be removed and kinuch and hadacha required.

[15] Although the Aruch Hashulchan (Y.D. 89:4) maintains that the waiting period starts from when one finishes theseudah that he partook of meat, nevertheless, most authorities, including many contemporary authorities, follow the Dagul Mervavah (ad loc. 1), and are of the opinion that the waiting period starts immediately after one finishes eating the actual meat product and not the entire seudah. These Poskim include the Erech Hashulchan (ad loc. 3), Darchei Teshuva (ad loc. 4), Atzei Ha'Olah (Hilchos Bassar B'chalav, 3:1), Shu"t Moshe Ha'Ish (Y.D. 16), and the Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. 9), as well as Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (cited in Piskei Halachos, Y.D. Bassar B'chalav 8, pg. 54), Rav Shmuel Halevi Vosner (Kovetz M'Beis Levi on Yoreh Deah, Bassar B'chalav 2, pg. 33), the Debreciner Rav and Rav Asher Zimmerman (both cited in Rayach Habosem on Bassar B'chalav Ch. 3, Question 28), Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg (cited in Shu"t Divrei Chachamim, Y.D. Ch. 1, Question 6), Rav Chaim Kanievsky (cited in Doleh U'Mashkeh pg. 257), Rav Menashe Klein (Shu"t Mishnah Halachos vol. 5:97, 2), the Rivevos Efraim (vol. 5:516), and Rav Shalom Krauss (Shu"t Divrei Shalom on Y.D. 25).

[16] For an elucidation of what exactly Mar Ukva and his father disagreed upon, see the Tosafos Yom Tov's Toras Ha'Asham (76, s.v. v'kasav d'nohagin).

[17] Tur (Y.D. 89:1 and O.C. 173) and Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. ad loc. 1). As the renowned talmid of the Maharam M'Rotenberg, the Shaarei Dura (end 76) already put it in the late 1200s: "Ha'alon nahagu k'psak HaRambam shetzarich sheish sha'os bein seudas bassar l'seudas gevina." According to the Tur, Shach, and Taz (Y.D. ad loc. 1), this halacha is based on the fact that we pasken following both Rashi's and the Rambam's shittos lemaaseh. See also Pri Megadim (ad loc. M.Z. 1).

[18] The Rashal (Yam Shel Shlomo, Chullin Ch. 8:9; quoted lemaaseh by the Shach in Y.D. 89:8) writes that anyone who has even a "Rayach HaTorah, a scent of Torah" would wait six hours. The Chochmas Adam (ibid.) writes that whoever doesn't wait six hours violates "Al Titosh Toras Imecha" (Mishlei Ch. 1:8). The Aruch Hashulchan (Y.D. 89:7) writes that whoever doesn't wait six hours is in the category of "poretz geder" who deserves to be bitten by a snake (Kohelos Ch. 10:8). See also Kanfei Yonah (ad loc. pg. 65a-b) and Pri Toar (ad loc. 5) for similar assessments. The Shlah (Shaar Ha'Osiyos, Kedushas Ha'Achilah 95, Hagahah) wrote in his son that he does not view the minhag of waiting only one hour in a positive light, indeed referring to it as "Ra b'einei me'od," and as most of the Rishonim, including the Rambam, Rosh, and Rashba, mandated waiting six hours, he exhorted him "al tifnu l'minhag artzachem b'zeh," not to follow the lenient view.

[19] See, for example, the Gemara in Shabbos (10a) and Pesachim (12b), Ritva (Chullin 105a s.v. bassar bein), Rosh (ad loc. end 5), Rashba (Toras Hayabiy, Bayis 3, Shaar 4), Baal Ha'Itur (Shaar 1, Hilchos Bassar B'chalav 13a-b), Lechem Mishneh (on the Rambam ibid.), Tur and Shulchan Aruch and main commentaries (O.C. 157:1), Biur HaGra"m (Y.D. 89:2), SM"A (C.M. 5:10), and Mor U'Ketziach (184 s.v. v'chein).

[20] Rambam (ibid.), Meiri (Chullin 105a s.v. v'hadar; however, in a separate sefer - Magen Avos, beg. Inyan 9, he explicitly writes that one may wait five hours - "sheish sha'os oh chameish"), Agur (Hilchos Seudah 223 and Hilchos Issur V'Heter 1242), Kol Bo (106 s.v. v'achar bassar; and in Orchos Chaim vol. 2, Hilchos Issurei Maachalos pg. 335:73 s.v. v'achar).

[21] Several authorities make this diyuk, including the Minchas Yaakov (Sofes L'Mincha 76:1), Butchatcher Rav (Daas Kedoshim Y.D. 89:2), and the Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. 2). Authorities who relied on not needing a full six hour wait include the Divrei Chaim of Sanz (cited in Shu"t Siach Yitzchak 399 and Shu"t Divrei Yatziv, Likutum V'Hashmatos 69; however, see also Shu"t Yashiv Yitzchak vol. 5:14 and Shu"t Mishnah Halachos vol. 12:11), Rav Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk (cited in Torah L'Daas vol. 2, Parashas Beha'aloscha pg. 229, Question 5), Rav Seligman Baer (Yitzchak Dov) Bamberger (the renowned Würzburger Rav and author of Shu"t Yad Halevi; cited in Kovetz Hame'ayen, Teves 5739, pg. 33, and later in Nishmas Avraham, third edition, Y.D. 89, footnote 1), the Matteh Efraim (Ardit; pg. 28:4), Rav Aharon Kotler (cited in Shu"t Ohr Yitzchak vol. 1, Y.D. 4), Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Kovetz Moriah, Teves 5756, pg. 79), Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (Shu"t Yissa Yosef O.C. vol. 2:119, 5), Rav Ovadiah Yosef (Shu"t Yabia Omer vol. 1, Y.D. 4:13 and vol. 3, Y.D. 3; although in his earlier teshuva he only mentions being lenient after eating chicken, in his later teshuva he adds that he holds the same dispensation applies equally after eating meat, and not as some mistakenly suggest as to his intent), and Rav Moshe Sternbuch (Shu"t Teshuvos V'Hanhagos vol. 6:171 s.v. ul'atzmi; although he personally is stringent, he holds that one may indeed be lenient on five and a half hours). See also Rav Eitam Henkin H'y'd's defense of the minhag of waiting five hours and a bit, in his comprehensive maamar in Kovetz Beis Avraham V'Yisrael (vol. 141, pg. 71-76; also citing the shittos of his father, Rav Yehuda Herzl Henkin - the "Bnei Ananim," and his great-grandfather, Rav Yosef Eliyahu Henkin).

[22] Including Rabbeinu Yerucham (Sefer Ha'Adam, Nesiv 15, vol. 2:27, pg. 137), Chamudei Daniel (Taaruvo vol. 2:15), Shu"t Ginas Veradim (Gan Hamelech 154), Perach Shoshan (1:1), Mikdash Me'at (on Daas Kedoshim ibid. 2), Yalkut Me'am Loaz (Parashas Mitzpatim pg. 889-890 s.v. shiur), Yad Yehuda (89, Peirush Hakotzer 1), Chofetz Chaim (Nidchei Yisrael Ch. 33), Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fischer (Shu"t Even Yisrael vol. 9:126, 5), Rav Chaim Kanievsky (cited in Doleh U'Mashkeh pg. 257), and the Badei Hashulchan (Y.D. 89:8 and Tziyunim ad loc. 14). Several other contemporary authorities maintain that one should strive to keep the full six hours lechatchilla, but may be somewhat more lenient in times of need, and not waiting an exact six hours. These include Rav Moshe Feinstein (cited in Shu"t Divrei Chachamim Y.D. 1:1; and in private conversation with Rav Moshe's grandson Rav Mordechai Tendler, author of Mesores Moshe), Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (cited in Shu"t Avnei Yashpei vol. 5:101, 3 and 4 and Ashrei Ha'Ish O.C. vol. 3, pg. 441:10), Rav Shmuel Halevi Vosner (Kovetz M'Beis Levi on Yoreh Deah, pg. 34:3 and footnote 3), and Rav Menashe Klein (Shu"t Mishnah Halachos vol. 5:97; 3; see also vol. 7:70 and vol. 12:11, where he strongly urges to wait a full six hours). The Pe as Sadecha (Shu"t vol. 3, Y.D. 29 s.v. annam) posits that this machlokes of whether or not six complete hours is mandated, might depend on a different machlokes whether a Talmid Chacham's seudah is supposed to be at the beginning or the end of the sixth hour [see Beis Yosef (C.M. 5:3), Drishah (ad loc. 7), Bach (ad loc. 7 s.v. ela), SM"A (ad loc. 10), Shach (ad loc. 6), Magen Avraham (O.C. 157:2), Elyah Rabba (ad loc. 1), Pri Megadim (ad loc. E.A. 2), Ba'er Heitiv (O.C. 157:2), Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 3), and Aruch Hashulchan (O.C. 157:2 and C.M. 11; who maintains that this is not necessarily a machlokes, but rather that the whole sixth hour is considered "zman achilas Talmid Chacham"]].

[23] Pri Chodosh (Y.D. 89:6). Others who rely on his opinion include the Gilyon Maharsha (ad loc. 3), Ikrei HaDa"t (Ikrei Dinim 10: end 5) and Minchas Yaakov (Sofes L'Mincha 76: end 1). Rav Aharon Wurmsh, renowned talmid of the Shaagas Areyeh, in his Me'orei Ohr (vol. 7, Chullin daf 105 s.v. chala bar chamra) writes that "peshita sheyesh l'smoch alav (the Pri Chodosh) b'shaar maachalei chalav, afilu baal nefesh, meshum shelo nizar b'Talmud rak gevina shemosheich taam v'nidbak bein hashinayim - certainly even the scrupulous may rely upon the Pri Chodosh's opinion regarding waiting time mandated prior to consuming milk and most dairy products, as the Gemara only singled out (hard) cheese, due to its meat-like characteristics of lingering taste and palate clinginess." The issue of hard cheese, its properties, and halachic status, is discussed at length in a previous article, titled "A Dairy Dilemma: Of Hard Cheese Complexities and Pizza Perplexities."

[24] Including the Yad Efraim (Y.D. 89:1), Yeshuos Yaakov (ad loc. Peirush Hakotzer 1), Maharsham (Daas Torah ad loc.), and the Zeicher Yehosef (Shu"t end 196), who allow one to rely on the Pri Chodosh only if one is sick or in times of great need. See also Darchei Teshuva (ad loc. 21).

[25] Including the Knesses Hagedolah (Y.D. 89, Hagahos on Tur, ad loc. 6-7), Maharach Algazi (Ba'ei Chayei (ad loc. 39b), Pri Megadim (ad loc. M.Z. 1), Pischei Teshuva (ad loc. 3), Kreisi U'Pleisi (ad loc. Pleisi 3), Chochmas Adam (40:12), Chida (Shiyurei Bracha, Y.D. 89:3-4), Zivchei Tzedek (ad loc. 2), Chaguras Shmuel (ad loc. 8), Ben Ish Chai (Year 2, Parashas Shlach 9), and Me'orei Ohr (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch on Yoreh Deah, 89:1; by Rav Yitzchak Isaac Shorr, Av Beis Din of Bucharest), who adds that one must wait six hours after eating meat, "bein b'kayitz, bein b'choref," winter and summer alike. See also Darchei Teshuva (ad loc. 6 and 20).

[26] Rema (Y.D. 89:1), Maharai (Hagahos Shaarei Dura 76:2; although according to his talmid in Leket Yosher, vol. 1, pg. 35:2, he personally waited six hours), Maharil (Minhagim, Hilchos Issur V'Heter 40:4 s.v. achal; although he refers to waiting six hours as "Minhag Chassidim"), and Issur V'Heter (40:4). In Shu"t Maharam M'Rotenberg (Lvov [Lemberg] edition; 552, Question 2), there is a teshuva from Rav Avigdor Ben Rav Elya

Hakohen stating that the Maharam was of this opinion as well, that one must only wait a 'sha'ah kalah' between meat and milk. Although the Rashal (ibid.) and Taz (Y.D. 89:2) cast aspersions on this custom, the Vilna Gaon (Btur HaGr" a ad loc. 6) defends it as the Zohar's minhag as well, to wait an hour between all milk and meat meals [this is addressed at length in a previous article titled "To Bench or Not to Bench?... That is the Question"]. Relevant to the proper custom in Amsterdam, see Minhagei Amsterdam (pg. 20:24 and pg. 52), Shu"t Yashiv Yitzchak (vol. 13:25), and Shu"t Shav V'Rafa (vol. 3:114).

[27] There is no mention of a three hour wait in any traditional halachic source, save for one. And, although the Badei Hashulchan (Mihum to Y.D. 89) and several others cite Rabbeinu Yerucham's Kitzur Issur V'Hetter (39; found at the end of his main sefer) as a possible source for this minhag, as it does mention waiting 'Gimmel Sha'os' [using the letter 'Gimmel'], it is important to note that this is an apparent misprint, as in the full sefer itself (Sefer Ha'Adam, Nesiv 15, vol. 2:27, pg. 137) Rabbeinu Yerucham spells out unequivocally that one must wait "lechol hapachos sheish sha'os, at least six hours!" Additionally, the source he cites for his three hour quote is Rabbeinu Peretz, who also actually mandates waiting six hours (Hagahos on SMa"K 213:8). Furthermore, the actual quote is waiting "Gimmel Sha'os k'Rashi," three hours as per Rashi's shittah. As the Chida (Shiyurei Bracha, Y.D. 89:2 s.v. gam) points out, there is no record of Rashi holding such an opinion; rather the opposite in Sefer Ha'Orah (110), that one must wait "Shiur Seudasa Achariti" between eating meat and cheese. Moreover, it seems likely that Rabbeinu Yerucham is not the author of the Kitzur Issur V'Hetter attributed to him (see Rabbi Yisrael Ta-Shma's article in Kovetz Sinai, Shvat-Adar 5729). For more on the topic of Rabbeinu Yerucham and three hours, see Rav Moshe Sternbuch's Orchos Habayis (Ch. 7, note 45), Rav Chaim Kanievsky's opinion cited in Kovetz Nitzotzei Aish (pg. 860:32), and Rav Asher Weiss' Shu"t Minchas Asher (vol. 1, 42:2, s.v. u' mkivan). Renowned Rabbanim who served throughout Germany who wrote to keep six hours include Rav Yonason Eibeshutz (Kehillas AH"U; Kreisi U'Pleisi 89:3), the Pri Megadim (Kehillos in Berlin and Frankfurt; Y.D. 89, M.Z. 1), Rav Yosef Yuzpa Koschmann (Noheg K'zon Yosef-Minhag Frankfurt, Hilchos Seudah pg. 120:4), the Würzburger Rav, Rav Seligman Baer (Yitzchak Dov) Bamberger (cited in Kovetz Hame'ayen, ibid. and later in Nishmas Avraham ibid.; although, as mentioned previously he held "chameish sha'os u' mashehu" was sufficient to be considered six hours), and Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (Chorev vol. 4, Ch. 68, pg. 30). [In an interesting counter-point, in his English translation of Chorev, titled "Horeb," Dayan Dr. Isidor (Yishai) Grunfeld added a footnote (pg. 327, par. 453, footnote 2) supporting the "widespread minhag" in "western countries" of "waiting only three hours."]

[28] Mizmor L' Dovid (Y.D. 89:6). Rav Hamburger's explanation was written in a letter to Mori v'Rabi Rav Yonason Wiener (dated Rosh Chodesh Tamuz, 5765). See Shu"t Nachlas Pinchas (vol. 1:36, 7) for a similar assessment. An additional rationale was posited by Rabbi Shimon Silver in his recent Talei Oros (Redes HaTal, Inyanei Chag HaShvuos). He cites that regarding certain halachos, we find that between one set meal and the next, there should be three hour wait. For example, the halacha states that on Erev Shabbos, one may not start a seudah after the 9th hour-which is three (halachic) hours before the onset of Shabbos, as then he will enter Shabbos too full to be able to accord the proper honor and respect due a Shabbos seudah [see Gemara Pesachim (99b), and Beis Yosef and Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 249:2)]. Hence, he posits that this possibly is the Gemara in Chullin's intent with waiting "m'seudasa l'seudasa achrina," meaning the amount of time in between set meals necessitated in other places in Shas, which is three hours. For other sevaros, see Rabbi Yaakov Skoczylas' Ohel Yaakov (on Bassar B'chalav, 89, end footnote 1; quoting Rav Shimon Schwab) and Shu"t Mishnah Halachos (vol. 16: end 9).

[29] This author has seen this theory posited by both Rav Yisroel Belsky and Rav Binyomin Hamburger. Thanks are due to Dr. Steven Oppenheimer, who related that his mother described her meals in Vienna exactly this way. Rav Moshe Sternbuch (Shu"t Teshuvos V'Hanagos vol. 6:171 s.v. v'nireh) implies this as well; explaining that the common German minhag is most likely based on Tosafos' shittah (see next paragraph above) and therefore dependent on actual meals, which in Germany would have commonly been lunch, or to be more precise, "Gabelfrühstück," a second light breakfast or brunch, three hours after breakfast.

[30] Tosafos (Chullin 105a s.v. l'seudasa), Ravyah (1108; cited by the Rosh and Hagahos Ashri to Chullin Ch. 8:5), Rema (Y.D. 89:1).

[31] Rabbeinu Tam's opinion is found in Tosafos (Chullin 104b s.v. of). Other Ashkenazic Rishonim who wrote similarly include the BeHa"G (Hilchos Brachos, end Ch. 6, pg. 9b, bottom right column s.v. amar Rav Chisda), Sefer Yereim (149), and the Baal Hama'or (in his glosses to Gemara Chullin, pg. 37a in the Rif's pagination, s.v. Rav Yitzchak). It is noteworthy that the Maharam M'Rottenberg, a bastion of Ashkenazic psak who is considered lenient regarding this topic, is quoted (Shu"t Maharam M'Rottenberg, Lvov [Lemberg] edition; 552, Question 2) as explicitly rejected this shittah, explaining that the Gemara is teaching that one may not simply perform kinuach and hadacha to eat cheese after meat.

[32] Kaf Hachaim (Palaji; Ch. 24:25-26). This was known to be the Arizal's custom (Taamei HaMitzvos of Rav Chaim Vital, Shaar HaMitzvos, Parashas Mishpatim). See also Shulchan HaTahor (173:2), Ben Ish Chai (Year 2, Parashas Shlach 15), Shu"t Torah L'Shma (212), and Shu"t Shraga HaMeir (vol. 7: end 105). Some say (see Piskei Teshuvos, end 494) that based on his writings to Parashas Mishpatim (s.v. lo sevasheh), the Noam Elimelech must have also generally kept this stringency (except for an allowance on Shavuos). However, it is known that there were several Gedolim who understood this to mean to wait an actual full 24 hours from eating meat before allowing milk products, including the Shlah (cited by his chaver Rav Yosef Yuzpa Haan-Norlingen in his Yosef Ometz, 137; remarkably, Rav Haan adds that he personally could not keep it and instead waited a mere 12 hours!) and the Reishis Chochma (in his Totzaos Chaim, Shaar 2, Hanhaga 45, pg. 32). Interestingly, the Darchei Teshuva (89:2) cites that the Yafeh Lev (vol. 8) asserted that the Arizal was only this stringent regarding eating dairy and meaty foods. Yet, he would certainly agree that "lekuli alma b'hadachas hapeh sagi," a mouth rinse alone is sufficient after simply drinking milk prior to eating meat, and not mandate a long waiting period. Thanks are due to Rabbi Dr. Eliezer Brodt for pointing out several of these sources.

[33] See Daas Kedoshim (Y.D. 89:2), Vayaas Avraham (of Tchechnov; pg. 333:51 and Ateres Zekainim ad loc. 155), Piskei Teshuva (vol. 3:285), Piskei Halachos of HaGri"sh Elyashiv (Y.D. Bassar B'chalav pg. 53:6; see also Shu"t Yissa Yosef, O.C. vol. 2:119, 6 and Ashrei Ha'Ish, O.C. vol. 3 pg. 442:15, who claim that Rav Elyashiv only intended to rule leniently after chicken and not actual meat). Rav Ruderman's predilection for this shittah was related to this author by his noted talmid, Rav Shmuel Bloom.

[34] The story about the Chasam Sofer is cited in Zichron L' Moshe (pg. 79), Shu"t Divrei Yisrael (vol. 2, pg. 28, footnote) and in Shu"t Siach Yitzchak (399).

[35] Including Shu"t Siach Yitzchak (ibid.), Shu"t Teshuvos V'Hanagos (vol. 1:431), Kovetz M'Beis Levi on Yoreh Deah (pg. 34, 5; citing the opinion of Rav Shmuel Halevi Vosner), Shu"t Beis Avi (vol. 3, Y.D. beg. 108), Shu"t Mishnah Halachos (vol. 7:70), Shu"t Shulchan Halevi (Ch. 22:10, 1), Doleh U'Mashkeh (pg. 257-258 and footnote 15; citing the opinion of Rav Chaim Kanievsky, as well as his father, the Steipler Gaon). This leniency is also conspicuously absent from the vast majority of earlier authorities.

[36] Tosafos (Menachos 20b s.v. v'nifsal). See also Shorshei Minhag Ashkenaz (vol. 1, pg. 18) citing the late great Ponovezher Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Elazar Menachem Mann Shach, on the importance of keeping family minhagim, even if it runs contrary to accepted convention. Indeed, in his letter cited previously, Rav Binyomin Hamburger adds that this was also the view of the Chazon Ish, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, and Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky. Nonetheless, there were/are several contemporary Poskim, including Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (He'aros B'Maseches Chullin 105b s.v. v'ha), Rav Shmuel Halevi Vosner (cited in the aforementioned letter), Rav Menashe Klein (Shu"t Mishnah Halachos vol. 16: end 9), Rav Shimon Schwab (cited in the aforementioned letter), Rav Chaim Kanievsky (Teshuvos printed in Kashrus in the Kitchen Q & A, pg. 209), and Rav Yitzchak Yosef (Yalkut Yosef, Issur V'Hetter vol. 3, 89:17), who when asked, were known to have shown predilection for telling those who normally waited less than six hours due to family minhag, that they should start keeping the full six if at all possible. For further discussions on this topic, see Shu"t Pe'as Sadecha (vol. 3, Y.D. 29; thanks are due to R' Sam Neufeld for pointing out this source), Shu"t Minchas Asher (vol. 1, 42:2), Rav Aharon Pfeiffer's Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (Bassar B'chalav, Ch. 10:16), Maadanei Asher (Issur V'Hetter, 41:3 s.v. ul' dina), Mesores Moshe (vol. 2, pg. 176:26), Shu"t Yashiv Yitzchak (vol. 13:25), Shu"t Shav V'Rafa (vol. 3:114), Kuntress Yad Dodi (Kashrus:#32a-b, and Klalim/Minhagim:#5a-b, 15, and 17), and Rav Herschel Schachter's maamar titled

"Hashbeia Hishbea" (Kovetz Beis Yitzchak vol. 39, 5767; pg. 516:5; thanks are due to Rabbi Yisroel Israel and Rabbi Dr. Eliezer Brodt for providing this source).

[37] Avos (Ch. 4, Mishnah 1).

this article was written l'zechus for a Refuah Sheleimah for Yissochoor Dov ben Rochel Miriam, Rafael Naftali Moshe ben Rochel, Rochel Miriam bas Dreiza Liba, and l'zechus Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam v'chol yotzei chalatzeha for a yeshua sheleimah teikfu u' miyad!

L'iluy Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda

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

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

transcribed by Yitzchak Etshalom

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So Moshe said to YHVH,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Where is the transition from the Sanctification of the Levites to the Pesach baShana haShenit? We don't know. Two different stories? We have no continuous development.

Then, following the description of the Pesach baShana haShenit and Pesach Sheni, we have another description of the cloud, the pillar of cloud guiding the people on their journeys.

There is no transition from the story about the Pesach to the story about the pillar of cloud, and the Torah tells us in detail how the journeys of B'nei Yisrael are completely dependent upon the position of the pillar of cloud.

Whenever the cloud lifted from over the tent, then the Israelites would set out...

Following the narrative about the cloud, the Torah relates to us the commandment pertaining to Hatzotzrot- the two trumpets - and their use for assembling the community and the journeying of the camps. And the Torah describes almost in detail the signal system connected with the Hatzotzrot; one blast, so one camp moves, another blast, a different camp moves, the T'ruah, the T'ki'ah. At the conclusion of the section dealing with the Hatzotzrot, the Torah reviews the previous theme; the journeying of the camps, and again tells us in detail the order in which the camps traveled, Yehuda at the head, followed by Yissakhar and so forth. Then, after the Torah describes the organization of the camps and how they moved and traveled, suddenly we hear a very strange conversation which, prima facie, is puzzling and enigmatic. A conversation between Moshe and his father-in-law. Moshe, humbly extending an invitation to his father-in-law:

Moses said to Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which YHVH said, 'I will give it to you'; come with us, and we will treat you well; for YHVH has promised good to Israel." But he said to

him, "I will not go, but I will go back to my own land and to my kindred." He said, "Do not leave us, for you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us. Moreover, if you go with us, whatever good YHVH does for us, the same we will do for you.

Moshe argued with his father-in-law; he wanted his father-in-law to leave Midian and to join B'nei Yisrael, but Yitro was stubborn.

Following this conversation, we are suddenly confronted with a Parasha consisting of two Pesukim:

Vay'hi bin'soa ha'aron... - Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say, Arise, YHVH, let your enemies be scattered, and your foes flee before you." And whenever it came to rest, he would say, Return, YHVH of the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

At the beginning of the Parasha there is an inverted Nun and at the end of the Parasha there is an inverted Nun, in order to emphasize that this parasha is out of context here. Indeed it is out of context. And the question is obvious: if it is out of context, why did the Torah insert the Parasha into a section within which it would always stand out as out of context. The Parasha could have been beautifully inserted at the end of Pekudei:

For the cloud of YHVH was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, before the eyes of all the house of Israel at each stage of their journey.

The two Pesukim would have been a most appropriate conclusion or sequel to that:

Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say, Arise, YHVH, let your enemies be scattered, and your foes flee before you." And whenever it came to rest, he would say, Return, YHVH of the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

And finally, following the Parasha of Vay'hi bin'soa ha'aron..., the Torah tells us the tragic story - which we will analyze - of the Kivrot haTa'avah - the people who desired. They didn't do anything else, no crime, no idolatry, no murder, no sexual promiscuity, no robbery, no burglary - nothing, they just were overcome by a desire and they wept that's all - they didn't yell, they didn't throw stones at Moshe, like they did in other situations. Nothing, they didn't say anything, they weren't threatening anyone, just complaining. People of desire - this tragic story is told. The name Kivrot haTa'avah - could have been invented today, to characterize modern man. The grave of desire which man digs for himself, or I would rather say, the grave which the desire digs for man. The grave of the voluptuaries.

Finally, the conclusion of the Sidra is the story of Miriam.

We simply are perplexed. How many stories are in B'ha'alot'kha? One story or many stories? If there is one, there must be transition; if there is no transition, if there is no gradual and systematic development of a theme, then there is no unity. Whoever writes a composition paper, in first year English, knows that there must be unity. Unity is when a theme is developed. Prima facie, there is no development of anything and there is no literary unity. There are many stories. But each story per se is half a story, not a complete story. (Whatever I tell you tonight occurred to me during the Torah reading on Shabbat - it's completely new, so you won't find it anywhere - no one plagiarized me yet. I'm just reviewing my thoughts to you tonight, for the first time.) I had a feeling when the Ba'al Qeria (Torah reader) was reading the Sedra, as if we were jumping like a bee on a clear warm summer morning from flower to flower accumulating the sweet nectar. Is it possible that the principle of the unity of the Torah, the unity of the themes which the Torah develops was lost in Parashat B'ha'alot'kha? It is an impossibility.

Now let me move slowly - my job, you understand very well, is to restore the unity of the Parasha.

The Parasha is one story, one tragic story. A tragic story which changes Jewish history completely, from top to bottom. The inverted Nuns symbolize an inverted historical process here. An inverted Nun is not so bad. But when history is being inverted, not realized or stopped suddenly, this is very tragic. Our Rabbis speak about punishment in B'ha'alot'kha

as the worst distressful events in Jewish History, "In order to separate between one punishment and another punishment."

Let us start with the Exodus. When the Almighty charged Moshe with the assignment of redeeming the Jews, liberating them from Egypt, he told him the following: (He told him many things, but the Hinuch, R. Aharon haLevi (?), said that the necessary prerequisite of the Exodus is the following sentence:)

And it shall be your sign that it was I who sent you, when you will free the people from Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.

This is a difficult sentence. In other words, the Almighty told Moshe that the Exodus drama will culminate in two events:

you shall worship God on this mountain

How many events does this encompass? It means that the Exodus will not be consummated until you worship God at this mountain. What does He mean by this? What did Moshe understand by these words?

The Hinuch says: He meant two things: Mattan Torah the giving of the Law, the Torah teaches Man how to worship God, the continuous worship of God; the Man who lives according to the principles and rules of the Torah is a steady worshipper of God. There is no neutral moment; worship is a continuous process.

However, he meant something else, namely the construction of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). Certainly the purpose of the Mishkan is worship. As a matter of fact, the Torah was given at Mount Sinai and the Mishkan was constructed immediately after Moshe came down from the Mount, Betzalel started the work of constructing the Mishkan on the day after Moshe came down from Mount Sinai, assembled the people and told them that a Mishkan should be constructed. It's no wonder that following the Aseret haDibrot (Ten Statements, - "Ten Commandments") in Parashat Yitro, God mentioned to Moshe the construction of an altar:

But if you make for me an altar of stone...

If the Jews hadn't succumbed to the hysteria of the Erev Rav (multitudes), had they rejected the Egel, the two objectives would have been realized much sooner. Because of the Egel, the time schedule was changed and the consummation of the "you shall worship God on this mountain" was delayed for 80 days. If the Egel had not been made and the whole tragedy of the Egel had been avoided, Moshe would have come down on Tamuz 17 and immediately they would have started to construct the Mishkan. Because of the Egel, Moshe had to spend 80 more days on Mount Sinai in prayer. Moshe came down from Mount Sinai on the day following Yom HaKippurim -so the construction of the Mishkan was delayed for 80 days. However, on the day after Yom HaKippurim, after Moshe came down with the second set of Tablets and the message of forgiveness, he quickly assembled the congregation and told them about the immediate task to be discharged - the building of the Beit HaMikdash. The work of construction began immediately. How long did it take them to construct the Mishkan, to complete the work? The Mishkan was completed and put together on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, which was, according to Our Rabbis, the Shemini laMilu'im - (eighth day of the Milu'im - handing over the priesthood to Aharon) - the day on which the princes began to offer their gifts to the Beit HaMikdash. When those two objectives, Mattan Tora and the construction of the Beit HaMikdash, were achieved, the Geula found its realization. The "you shall worship God on this mountain" was translated into reality, into fact.

The people, therefore, had no business prolonging their stay in Midbar Sinai (the Wilderness of Sinai). They stayed in Midbar Sinai as long as it was necessary to receive the Torah - which had to happen twice, due to the Egel, and as long as it was necessary in order to complete the work on the Beit HaMikdash, because both are encompassed by the commandment: But the very moment that the second set of tablets were delivered to Yisrael and the Beit HaMikdash was constructed and completed, the vessels erected and the sacrifices offered, the task of Yisrael in Midbar Sinai was discharged and fulfilled. There was no purpose in extending the sojourn any longer.

The Torah in Naso tells us about the final act of the dedication of the Mishkan, namely, the sacrifices by the princes. The Torah did not forget to mention a secondary matter, like the sanctification of the Levi'im. The Torah apprises us in Tzav about the sanctification of the Kohanim, which was of primary significance. In a word, with the dedication of the Mishkan by the princes and the election of the Levi'im, everything which was necessary in order to have the Mishkan serve the great purpose of worship was prepared and ready; the work was completed. When could B'nei Yisrael simply get up and leave Midbar Sinai? The Mishkan was completed on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the twelve princes offered their gifts, the Almighty said:

They shall present their offerings, one leader each day, for the dedication of the altar...

meaning Rosh Chodesh Nissan plus 12 days. They were ready to march on the 13th of Nissan. However, the cloud did not move or rise, because the next day was Erev Pesach, the Korban Pesach, so the march was postponed until after Pesach. Everybody knew that the stay of the Jews in the wilderness of Sinai came to a close; the job was done; the Beit HaMikdash built, the Torah given, now we have to resume our march. However, the march had to wait until after the Jews offered the Korban Pesach. The second Pesach they celebrated in Midbar Sinai:

YHVH spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: Let the Israelites keep the passover at its appointed time.

(The Almighty said:) "I will postpone the journey until after the Korban Pesach will be offered."

So the Torah told us about the Korban Pesach in B'ha'alot'kha, because the Korban Pesach was the only obstacle to the resumption of the march. During the offering of the Pesach, the ritually impure men inquired about their status, Moshe Rabbenu asked the Almighty and the institution of Pesach Sheni was introduced for those who were unable to offer the Pesach in Nissan. It is perfect continuity: The sanctification of the Levi'im was the last act of "you shall worship God on this mountain." It was not as important as the sanctification of the Kohanim, which is why the Torah tells us about the sanctification of the Kohanim in Tzav and Tetzaveh. The sanctification of the Levi'im is not as important; you could operate the Beit HaMikdash without the Levi'im. Shira (the main function of the Levi'im) is not indispensable; the Levi'im are more or less a luxury. The Torah tells us that every detail was completed, we were ready to march, the Almighty told Moshe to offer the Pesach first in Midbar Sinai and after the Pesach was offered, the B'nei Yisrael were supposed to resume their march. In a word, I repeat, the two prerequisites for moving on were met: the Torah given and accepted and the Mishkan ready for worship. The great march was supposed to start; the march to Eretz Yisrael.

All 4 freedoms were attained, "I will take out...I will save...I will redeem...", and with Mattan Torah and the construction of the Mikdash, the "I will take..." was realized as well. The hour was struck for the fifth freedom to be realized and be translated into a reality, namely "I will bring (you into the land...)". Now, how long was the march supposed to last? Several days. That's why the Torah reveals to us the details of the march. First, who was the guide, the leader? If you march towards a certain destination, particularly in the desert, you need a leader. The answer is the pillar of cloud- as an instrument in the hands of the Almighty. The guide was the Almighty as the Torah told us in B'shallach: YHVH went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night.

Now the Torah tells us how the camps were arranged marching, which tribes formed the avant garde and which tribes formed the rear guard: M'asef lekhol haMachanot. The Torah speaks of Tziv'otam (hosts) of warriors: Kol Yotz'ei Tzava. The Torah also relates to us the story of the two Hatzotzrot in this context because it's very important, the story of the signal system. Since Moshe was the commander he instructed the various camps on their march to the promised land, so there was need for communication. And the means of communication were the two silver trumpets, the Hatzotzrot of silver.

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

So they set out from the mount of YHVH three days' journey with the ark of the covenant of YHVH going before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting place for them,

and

When both are blown, the whole congregation shall assemble before you at the entrance of the tent of meeting. But if only one is blown, then the leaders, the heads of the tribes of Israel, shall assemble before you. When you blow a T'ruah, the camps on the east side shall set out; when you blow a second T'ruah, the camps on the south side shall set out. A T'ruah is to be blown whenever they are to set out.

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

Interesting is the conversation between Moshe and his father-in-law. What kind of mood on the part of Moshe is mirrored or reflected by this conversation? We get a glimpse into Moshe, into his mood, those days, after the second Passover as the people started to march.

In the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, the cloud lifted from over the tabernacle of the covenant. Then the Israelites set out by stages...

It was not one of the many journeys; it was the journey, the final journey.

What is the emotional climate of this conversation:

Moses said to Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which YHVH said, 'I will give it to you'; come with us, and we will treat you well; for YHVH has promised good to Israel."

It is a climate of serenity, of peace of mind, an unqualified assurance. Moshe spoke of the final journey to the promised land. No waiting anymore, no Ani Ma'amin - I believe in the coming of Mashiach, even if he may tarry, I will wait for him... There would be no need for it anymore. No delays, no procrastination, no if and no when: Im Shamo'a Tishm'u - If you will listen - It is now! It is going to happen right now, not tomorrow. It is present tense, not "We will set out" - rather, "We are setting out"

...for the place of which YHVH said, 'I will give it to you'; come with us, and we will treat you well; for YHVH has promised good to Israel.

all the promises will be fulfilled. I won't have to ask questions

YHVH, why have you mistreated this people? Why did you ever send me? Ever since I came to Pharaoh...

no problems, no questions, no doubts, nothing! It will be very simple.

I want to let you in on another secret. It was not an invitation which a son-in-law extended to his father-in-law. It was not an invitation extended by an individual to another human being to share the good things in life. It was more than that. It

was an invitation extended by Moshe, as a representative of Klal Yisrael to all Gerim of all generations. The Midrash in Kohelet says:

All of the rivers flow into the sea and the sea is never filled" - these are the Gerim who come to Eretz Yisrael to convert.

It was extended to the entire non-Jewish world: Join us! Join us in the promised land - provided that the non-Jew is ready to subject himself to the same Divine discipline as we did. Any human being was offered the opportunity to join the march to the promised land, the march to the Messianic era. If that march had been realized, the coming of Mashiach would have taken place then and Moshe would have been the Melekh haMashiach. It was quite optional - the Jews could have reached it, they lost it so Moshe is not the Melekh haMashiach and the distance between them in time is long and far. The Torah was given to us. Eretz Yisrael was given to us, certainly. However, we were told to pass on God's word to mankind as such. We all know the famous verse in Shofarot of Rosh HaShana:

All you inhabitants of the world, you who live on the earth, when a signal is raised on the mountains, look! When a trumpet is blown, listen!

We are all invited - all the dwellers on this world.

We are setting out for the place of which YHVH said, 'I will give it to you'; come with us, and we will treat you well...

What does Moshe think? That Yitro, the non-Jew, is dependent upon us? Our Torah is commodious enough to encompass the entire world.

There is enough Hessed, goodness and happiness in the Torah to be transmitted to others and to be shared by others. Join our triumphal march, Moshe said to Yitro, towards our destiny. It may become your destiny as well. When I read this Parasha, it attracts me; there is something moving, touching. Sometimes I want to cry when I read this Parasha. The simplicity with which the great Moshe, the master of all wise men and the father of all prophets speaks. He uses the grammatical first person:

We are setting out...come with us, and we will treat you well...whatever good YHVH does for us...

What does it mean? Moshe was certain - there was not even a shadow of doubt in his mind - that he was going to enter the promised land. He and the entire congregation will be classified as both Yotz'ei Mitzrayim (departers from Egypt) and Ba'ei ha'Aretz (those who come into the Land). He was sure, he was convinced that he would see the beautiful land, the hills of Judea, the prairie land of the Sharon Valley, he was certain that he will climb the mount of Lebanon. Later he prayed, but his prayer did not come true:

...Let me cross over to see the good land beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and the Lebanon.

But that time he felt no need for prayer: there was no doubt about his destiny.

The whole operation, if successfully brought to a close would have lasted several days. And at that time there was no need for Meraglim, for scouts to explore the land, to see whether the land is good or bad, or to see whether the cities are surrounded by walls or they are open cities, what kind of population is there - strong, weak, a sickly population or a healthy population. There was no need for it, all those scouts and all the exploration and intelligence work is only necessary if a man has doubts. This was the pre-doubt period in Jewish history.

We are setting out for the place of which YHVH said, 'I will give it to you'; come with us, and we will treat you well...

Share with us! An open invitation to everybody. Yitro or no Yitro, father-in-law of Moshe or the stranger. The Torah tells us indeed,

And they journeyed from the mount of the Eternal three days journey, and the Ark of the Covenant went before them in the three days journey to seek out a Menucha (resting place) for them,

Where did it go? Where is Menucha for the Jews? What was the destination? Rashi, quoting Sifri, says:

A distance of three days journey they miraculously traveled in one day, because the Almighty wanted to bring them into Eretz Yisrael.

My dear friends, tell me, at that time, before the great reversal took place, was the Parasha of Vay'hi bin'soa' ha'aron in its proper place or out of context? Before the Jews alienated God, before they fell from Him and they needed the Meraglim as scouts and they had doubts. Before, every Jew was convinced: This is the final consummation of all hope. It was beautiful, the Torah tells us:

And they journeyed from the mount of the Eternal three days journey, and the Ark of the Covenant went before them in the three days journey to seek out a Menucha (resting place) for them, the cloud of YHVH being over them by day when they set out from the camp. (meaning security on all sides)

Vay'hi Binsoa' ha'aron - Whenever the ark set out (leading them right into Eretz Yisrael) Moses would say, "Arise, YHVH, let your enemies be scattered, and your foes flee before you."

Who were the enemies? The last war they fought was the war against Amaleq and the next war was against Sichon and Og, 40 years later. Why was Moshe speaking about enemies and fiends and people who threatened them? Who did Moshe have in mind? We are traveling fast to Eretz Yisrael - there we will be confronted by somebody, if the great hope had been realized, there would have been no need to engage in battle for seven years.

Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say, Arise, YHVH, let your enemies be scattered, and your foes flee before you." And whenever it came to rest, he would say, Return, YHVH of the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

It was not misplaced. It was the continuation of the great story of the final, triumphal Messianic march into Eretz Yisrael, which was supposed to take place approximately 3500 years ago.

It was certainly in its place and there was no need for an inverted Nun at the beginning and for an inverted Nun at the end, it would have been the climax of the whole story. Had this come true, nothing had happened, the whole Jewish history would have taken a different turn. According to our tradition, (Hazzal said it many times) had Moshe entered Eretz Yisrael, it never would have been taken from us - because Moshe would have been crowned as Melekh haMashiach. The Messianic era would have commenced with the conquest of Eretz Yisrael by Moshe. Moshe believed with a great passion and love that the final march of redemption had begun - it was only a question of days.

Suddenly, something happened. Neither Moshe nor anybody else expected the event to transpire. What happened? In the story of the Egel, we know what happened. Concerning the Meraglim (spies) we know what happened. About Pe'or in Midian, 40 years later, we know what happened. What happened here? [Seemingly] nothing in particular.

And the multitude that was among them felt a lust, had a desire. And B'nei Yisrael wept again and they said: Who shall give us flesh to eat?

And the Torah tells us that this seizure by desire was evil. It aroused the wrath of the Almighty and also Moshe resented it. Uv'einei Moshe ra' - In Moshe's eyes it was evil - first time in Jewish history. Moshe was not the defense attorney: it was evil. This interrupted the great march. - it has brought the march to an end. The vision of Mashiach, of Eretz Yisrael, of the redemption of Yisrael, became a distant one, like a distant star on a mysterious horizon. It twinkled, but the road suddenly became almost endless. Why did Moshe feel discouraged? Why didn't he offer prayers for the people as was his practice in past situations?

Because the incident of Kivrot haTa'avah differed greatly from that of the Egel. The making of the Egel was the result of great primitive fright. The people thought that Moshe was died, they were afraid of the desert, they did not know what the future held in store for them, they were simply overwhelmed by a feeling of loneliness and terror, consequently, they violated the precept of Avodah Zarah. There were mitigating circumstances - they wanted the golden calf to substitute for Moshe, as all the Rishonim (medieval commentators) say.

When you speak about Avodah Zarah (idolatry), you have to distinguish between Avodah Zarah as a ceremony/ ritual and between the pagan way of life. In Hazal's opinion, an Avodah Zarah-worshipper will also adopt the pagan way of life. But in this day and age, we know that it's possible for people to live like pagans even though no idolatry is involved. Paganism is not the worship of an idol, it encompasses more - a certain style of life. What is the pagan way of life, in contradistinction to the Torah way of life? The pagan cries for variety for boundlessness for unlimited lust and insatiable desire, the demonic dream of total conquest, of drinking the cup of pleasure to its dregs. The pagan way of life is the very antithesis of Yahadut, which demands limitedness of enjoyment and the ability to step backwards if necessary, the ability to withdraw - to retreat. The unlimited desire, which the Greeks call hedone, is the worst desire in Man. When Man reaches out for the unreachable, for the orgiastic and hypnotic, then they don't violate the prohibition of Avodah Zarah, but they adopt the pagan way of life; and the Torah hated the pagan way of life more than it hated the idol. Because an idol cannot exist for a long time, it cannot last. Finally, an intelligent person realizes that it is just wood and metal; it has no life. Avodah Zarah per se is short-lived, however the pagan way of life has a tremendous attraction for people. The Torah describes so beautifully the way in which the pagan gathers, accumulates property - gathers the Slav, the quail, how he gathers property, means of gratification for his hungry senses.

So the people worked all that day and night and all the next day, gathering the quails; the least anyone gathered was ten homers; and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp.

They were mad with desire, there was no controlling/limiting element in their desire for vastness, the imagination excited them and their good sense was surrounded with a nimbus which was irresistible, "the more, the better, and you start gathering new goods even before you have completed gathering the other goods." The pagan is impatient and insatiable. That's what the Torah describes in Kivrot haTa'avah.

There's another story in the Torah which, in contradistinction to the unlimited desire of the pagan, the Torah describes the Jewish way of life. It's interesting - it's the Manna. And Moshe said to them: this is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat, gather as much of it as each of you requires to eat, an omer to a person, for as many as you as there are. But when they measure it, by the omer, he who gathered much had no excess and he who gathered little had no deficiency. This is the approach of Yahadut.

The great tragedy happened, the great triumphal final march suddenly came to a stop, the people who rejected the basic principle of economic limitedness and aesthetic enjoyment, these people were not worthy to enter the Land. Suddenly, parashat Vay'hi binsoa' ha'aron found itself dislocated. The distance to that land suddenly became very long. Of course, there was no edict yet concerning the 40 years, the time the people would have to spend in the desert, but Moshe felt intuitively that the great march had come to an end. Hopes he had will be unfulfilled and visions he had will not be realized and his prayers will be rejected. He knew that.

I tell you frankly, I don't have to say Moshe, Moshe was the master of the prophets, God revealed everything to him. I remember from my own experience, during the illness of my wife, who was sick for four years. Of course, I am a realist, and it is very hard to fool me - not even doctors can fool me. But, somehow I was convinced that somehow she would manage to get out of it. And I lived with hope and tremendous unlimited faith. I remember, it was the last Yom Kippur before she died. It was Kol Nidrei and I was holding a Sefer Torah for Kol Nidrei and when the Hazzan finished Kol Nidrei and said Shehech'yanu veqiy'manu vehigi'anu laz'man hazeh I turned over the Sefer Torah to a Talmid of mine and told him to put it in the Aron Kodesh. He put it in the Aron Kodesh, apparently he didn't place it well, I don't know what, but the Sefer Torah slipped and fell, not on the floor, but in the Aron Kodesh. At that time I was filled - don't ask me how or why - I felt a gefil - nothing will help. And indeed it was.

When the Am haMit'avim ( the people who had the craving) began to complain and to weep, Moshe knew: This is the end, he'll never see Eretz Yisrael, never! That's why he said:

If this is the way you are going to treat me, put me to death at once...and do not let me see my misery.

And how beautifully our Rabbis said:

"Eldad and Meidad were having prophecy in the camp" What did they say? What was the excitement about? They said just one short sentence: Moshe's hopes: "We are setting out...come with us, and we will treat you well..." will never come true Moshe will die - he'll be buried in the sand dunes in the desert - he'll never see the beautiful land and the Levanon - Moshe meit viY'hoshua makhnis Moshe will die and Yehoshua will lead [the people] in to the Land.

And then parashat Vay'hi binsoa' ha'aron lost its place - it was dislocated and displaced. Do you know why it was dislocated and displaced? Because two little Nuns were inverted - the march was inverted. Instead of the march bringing them closer to Eretz Yisrael, the march took them away from Eretz Yisrael. Binsoa' ha'aron the Nun was inverted and with the inversion of the Nun, Jewish history became inverted- and it is still inverted. The Parasha is still "dislocated". We cannot say "we are setting forth" with the same assurance and certitude that Moshe said it to Yitro his father-in-law just 24 hours before the Mit'avim inverted the Jewish process of redemption.

Finally, is now the continuation of the Parasha - I didn't yet explain the problem of Miriam, which I will now explain. The Torah describes the Exodus, Mattan Torah in Parashat Yitro, the construction of the Mikdash in Parashat Teruma. Suddenly, something happened which interrupted the continuity - the Egel, the construction was delayed for a certain number of days. Sefer Vayyikra (Leviticus) is devoted completely to the worship, to "you shall worship God on this mountain."

In Sefer Bamidbar (Numbers) the Torah tells us about the last act of dedication by the princes, and the lighting of the candles, and the sanctification of the Levi'im, so "you shall worship God on this mountain" was attained, the two objectives were reached, now the march began. The Torah tells us how the Jews were marching on the final triumphal march on the final triumphal journey to Eretz Yisrael, the pillar of cloud covered them, protected them, shielded them it was in front and was also the rear guard protecting them in back, and then how Moshe communicated with the camps, the Hatzotzrot of silver, and Moshe's conversation with Yitro, he already had Eretz Yisrael within his reach, he extended the generous invitation to mankind, to share in our Ge'ulah - our redemption, and everything was ready. Vay'hi Bin'soa' ha'aron - it should take us just a few more days. During the last few days, something happened - disaster struck. That disaster inverted Jewish History and that disaster dislocated Parashat Vay'hi Bin'soa' ha'aron. And that disaster inverted the march - instead of marching to Eretz Yisrael, we began to march away from Eretz Yisrael. Moshe discovered something else - he realized something else. He knew pretty well that he was chosen as the teacher of Klal Yisrael. God did not elect him as a diplomat, as a negotiator, but as the teacher or the Rebbe of the people, as their spiritual and moral leader. God Himself told him, when Moshe asked: "Who am I, that I should go to Phar'ao?" He said: "you shall worship God on this mountain".

Basically, "Moshe, had I been looking for a negotiator, I wouldn't have selected you. But I'm not looking for a negotiator - I can do the art of negotiating by myself. I need a teacher for my people - as a teacher, you yourself will agree that you are the best one - you are a teacher par excellence. And that's why I selected you: 'And it shall be your sign' - and that is the reason 'that it was I who sent you'; that I selected you and not somebody else (this is how the Sefer haHinukh understands it)." There were many people in Egypt who were qualified to be negotiators; because the purpose of the Exodus is not political freedom, but the conversion of a slave society into a Kingdom of Kohanim and a holy nation. And for that you are wonderful. Moshe knew this. However, he did not expect, until the Mit'avim, that he would assume the role of a teacher, but of a nursing mother/father - an Omein.

What is an Omein?- it is a nursing mother or father. Of course, a nursing mother teaches the baby. Perhaps the mother is the best and most important teacher in the life of a baby. But she does something else - the Rebbe teaches the talmidim. The nursing mother, in addition to teaching, carries the baby in her bosom or in her arms. "...as a nurse carries a sucking child,". What does this mean? Usually the father doesn't do it, the mother does it. The father has no patience for that. It has more meaning than the literal meaning of the word. The teacher does teach his disciple, but the disciple very seldom becomes a part of him. When the mother teaches the baby, the baby becomes a part of her. The mother, when she rears the baby, has one calling, one purpose, to protect the baby. The Omein or the mother basically do not belong to themselves. Many may be very critical of my statement but this is true according to Yahadut. A mother has no life of her own. She belongs to the infant. At least as long as the infant is helpless and is exposed to the dangers of a hostile environment. She belongs to the infant.

Moshe discovered now that teaching is not enough for a leader of Yisrael. A teacher, no matter how devoted, has a life of his own. That his job is nursing, carrying the baby in his arms, watching every step, guessing the baby's needs (a baby cannot say what she wants, you have to guess) feeling pain when the baby cries and being happy when the baby is cheerful. Teaching or instructing her good performances, but that is not everything. Moshe, who reconciled with his role as a teacher and leader of adults, began to doubt his ability to play the role of an Omein or mother nurse. Listen to his words: Did I conceive all these people, did I bear them, that you say to me: Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries an infant? Moshe discovered something tragic in a mother's life. That from now on, as an individual, he has no rights at all, no right to rejoice, whenever God will be good to him. As a private person, he is not entitled to enjoy life as an individual, to be happy in an ordinary way, like any other human being, because his children will never belong to Moshe. He lost his family. He became the mother nurse of K'lal Yisrael, no family of his own.

This is what our Rabbis say: "he separated himself from his wife." It isn't just his wife from whom he separated, it's the wife and children (two lovely boys), his sister, his brother. He could not share his joy with them, they could not share their joy with him, he is the father of Yisrael, the father of K'lal Yisrael, and that is what he means: the role of "as a nurse carries a sucking child" was imposed upon him during the rebellion of the Mit'onenim. He separated himself, not only from his mate, but also from his children. Where are Moshe's children? Do we ever come across Moshe's children? There was a census taken in the desert the beginning of the 40 years and at the end of the 40 years. Are Moshe's children mentioned? Not once.

This is the lineage of Aaron and Moses...These are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar;

Where are Moshe's children? Moshe didn't have children. And it is later, in T'nakh, the name of Moshe's child was mentioned, not as the son of Moshe, but the son of "Menasheh". Why was a little Nun added to the name? Not only in order to reflect unfavorably upon Moshe - this is ridiculous, Moshe was not responsible for what happened, but because Moshe did not have children. I always say that if Moshe had a child, then according to the law he would have been in a most awful dilemma. According to the law, it would have been required of him to give preference to his child, as far as the study of Torah is concerned, over the child of his next-door neighbor. This is a law which Moshe Rabbenu taught us:

Your own son takes precedence (in teaching Torah) over the son of your fellow.

On the other hand, Moshe had no right to give any preference, or to give an additional second to his son, because he was the father of every child within the Jewish community. So Moshe lost his children. He became the Omein, the nursing mother, of K'lal Yisrael.

And that is exactly what God told him at the time of Mattan Torah:  
You say to them, return to your tents, to your private lives, but you, stay here.

Moshe realized it during the incident of the Mit'onenim. And that is what Miriam, the true, loyal sister, resented. Does prophecy require of Man alienation of his family? Does God require of the prophet that he should forget his sister and brother, his children and wife, and dedicate himself only to the people?

...Has he not spoken through us also?

And we live a beautiful life with our husbands and children and relatives. And it doesn't interfere with our devotion to the people. That's exactly what God resented and told her: There is a difference between you and Moshe. An ordinary prophet does not have to sacrifice his private interest, his selfish concern, his family, his father, mother children, brother, sister; he can be a prophet, communicate with God, and at the same time be a devoted father, a loving brother, and a helpful head of the family. "Not so my servant Moshe." He's consecrated fully and wholly to me. And that's how the Parasha of B'haalot'kha concludes its long story - it's one story, this story - of a great march which could have led us into the Messianic era,

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

but which was interrupted by some multitude which was permissive, hedones.

Text Copyright © 2012 by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom and Torah.org. The author is Educational Coordinator of the Jewish Studies Institute of the Yeshiva of Los Angeles.

## **Parshat Be-Ha'alotecha**

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

### **INTRODUCTION:**

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

### **PART I: THE BIRD'S EYE VIEW:**

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

### **PART II: SOME SPECIFIC ISSUES:**

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

### **THE SHIUR:**

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

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

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

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

### **TAKING STOCK:**

What events occur in this parasha?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **WHERE IS THE CONTINUITY?**

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

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

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

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

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

## **PREPARING FOR DESTINY:**

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

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

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

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

The Rav puts all of this into perspective:

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

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

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

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

## **MURMURS OF TROUBLE:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **ABRAVANEL:**

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

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

#### **MOSHE THE NURSEMAID:**

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

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

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

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

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

**ABRAVANEL:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **MOSHE'S SLIP:**

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

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

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

### **BEKHOR SHOR 11:21 --**

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

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

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

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

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

### **SUMMING UP:**

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

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

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

Shabbat Shalom

\*\*\*\*\*

**THE TANACH STUDY CENTER [www.tanach.org](http://www.tanach.org)**  
***In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag***  
**Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by Menachem Leibtag**  
\*\*\*\*\*

**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 appreciate 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.

shabbat shalom  
menachem

=====

#### 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!

shabbat shalom,  
menachem

=====

#### **FOR FURTHER IYUN - PART II:**

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

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

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

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