



Parshas Beha'aloscha

For the week ending 16 Sivan 5757
20 & 21 June 1997

Overview

Aaron is taught the method for kindling the *Menorah*. Moshe sanctifies the *Levi'im* to work in the *Mishkan*. They replace the firstborn, who were disqualified after sinning with the golden calf. After five years of training, the *Levi'im* serve in the *Mishkan* from ages 30 to 50; afterwards they engage in less strenuous work. One year after the Exodus from Egypt, Hashem commands Moshe concerning the *Korban Pesach*. Those ineligible for the *Korban Pesach* request a remedy, and thus the giving of the *mitzvah* of *Pesach Sheini*, which allows a "second chance" to offer the *Korban Pesach* one month later. Miraculous clouds, that hover near the *Mishkan*, signal when to travel and when to camp. Two silver trumpets summon the princes or the entire nation for announcements. The trumpets also signal travel plans, war or festivals. The order in which the Tribes march is specified. Moshe invites his father-in-law, Yisro, to join the *Bnei Yisrael*, but Yisro returns to Midian. At the instigation of the *Eruv Rav* (the mixed multitude of Egyptians who joined the *Bnei Yisrael* in the Exodus) some of the people complain about the manna. Moshe protests that he is unable to govern the nation alone. Hashem tells him to select 70 elders, the first *Sanhedrin*, to assist him, and informs him that the people will be given meat until they will be sickened by it. Two candidates for the group of elders prophesy beyond their mandate, foretelling that Yehoshua instead of Moshe will bring the people to Canaan. Some protest, including Yehoshua, but Moshe is pleased that others have become Prophets. Hashem sends an incessant supply of quail for those who complained that they lacked meat. A plague punishes those who complained. Miriam makes a constructive remark to Aaron which also implies that Moshe is only like other Prophets. Hashem explains that Moshe's prophecy is superior to that of any other Prophet, and punishes Miriam with *tzara'as*, as if she had gossiped about her brother. Moshe prays for her, and the nation waits until she is cured before traveling.

Insights

KILROY WAS HERE

"And Aaron did thus." 8:3

One of the less attractive features of modern urban living is graffiti.

Sometimes the motive is political; sometimes it is anarchic. Really, the granddaddy of all modern graffiti are the initials carved into an oak tree together with a heart pierced by an arrow - '*Brian loves Brenda*' and the like. Or the ubiquitous 'Kilroy' who must have been more well-traveled than Marco Polo. For from Macchu Picchu in Peru to the Acropolis in Athens, you can find engraved on those ancient stones: "*Kilroy was here*".

What is the underlying motivation that makes people want to carve their names in stone, and spray their opinions in day-glow paint?

Man is terrified by the thought of his own transience. By carving his name in the Acropolis, he tries to extend his life span to thousands of years. "*Even though I may be dead and gone, I'm still alive as long as someone is reading this.*"

Graffiti is a cry of anguish in the face of our own transience.

When Aaron lit the Menorah, we are told that he did it without changing. What's so special about that? Of course, if G-d commands us to do something, we do it without changing the command.

No. When it says that Aaron didn't change, it means he didn't change *one iota* from the way G-d commanded him to do the mitzva. He did it *exactly* the way he was commanded. He resisted the natural desire to imprint his own character on what he was doing, to add something of his own personality, to immortalize himself.

Aaron was praised because he wanted to do nothing less *and nothing more* than the will of G-d. Hashem's will - His Mitzvos - are flawless. When Man tries to 'improve' on them, he is spraying day-glow paint over an edifice of celestial perfection.

FOR KEEP'S SAKE

"According to the word of Hashem would the Children of Israel journey..." 9:18

When you think of man's first landing on the moon, the picture that probably comes to your mind is that of Edward 'Buzz' Aldrin with his arms slightly lifted from the sides of his body by the bulk of his space suit. Distorted by the curvature of his helmet's visor is a reflection of the photographer, Neil Armstrong. In front of him are a few footprints that represent a 'giant leap.' Behind him the blackness of space.

Whenever we want to remember something, to have a reminder of a landmark event in our lives, we take pictures to immortalize the experience. Be it a wedding or a trip down the Orinoco, we make mementos of these moments. And by making these mementos, we fix these events in the map of our lives, and they become like signposts. Signposts that by telling where we have been, help us to clarify to where we are supposed to be going.

When the Jewish People moved away from Sinai after the giving of the Torah, they did it in a way which was flawed. The Torah says that "*And they traveled from Mount Sinai the way of three days.*" Rashi explains that 'the way of three days they traveled in one day.' And the Ramban says that 'they traveled from Mount Sinai with joy, like a child running out of school.'

But if you think about it, it's difficult to understand what was flawed in their behavior. After all, a person is supposed to run to do a mitzva, and they were 'running' to Eretz Yisrael where many of the mitzvos were to be performed exclusively.

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Weren't they merely fulfilling the command to do *mitzvos* with alacrity?

Furthermore, in this week's Parsha, the Torah itself teaches us that "According to the word of Hashem the Children of Israel traveled, and according to the word of Hashem, they camped." So what was their failing, since it was Hashem who commanded their movements?

The flaw was not in their actions, but in their feelings.

When something special happens in life, we want a memento to immortalize the moment. The Children of Israel, while wanting to journey as quickly as possible to Eretz Yisrael, should still have left Mount Sinai, the site of the giving of the Torah, with mixed feelings, with a little hint of melancholy that they were leaving this, the site of the Creation of the Jewish People; the fulfillment of the purpose of Creation.

They should have wanted, as it were, to have 'a photograph' — an emotional keepsake — of this, mankind's greatest giant leap.

THE BEST MAN FOR THE JOB

"And the man Moshe was more humble than anyone on the face of the earth." 12:3

How do you get a quart into a pint pot?

If the walls of a pot are very thick, what you can put inside will be less than if the walls were thin. The thinner the walls of a container, the less they intrude into the space inside the container, and thus the greater its capacity.

Moshe Rabbeinu was more humble than any man who lived. He made less of himself than anyone else. That doesn't mean he thought he was a *shlepper*! Moshe knew who he was. He was a king. But he understood that compared to Hashem, he was nothing. He understood this more clearly than anyone else who has walked this planet.

Moshe made himself like the skin of a garlic clove — virtually without substance — just the absolute minimum for him to exist in this world.

Thus, he was almost completely 'containing space.'

It is for this reason that he was able to receive and contain the Torah in its perfection.

It's not that Moshe was just 'the best man for the job.' It's not that he was *relatively* humble — more humble than those who surrounded him.

Rather, *Moshe reached an absolute and quantifiable level of humility, at which point he became able to contain the whole Torah in all its fulness and complexity.*

It therefore follows, that even today, if someone reached Moshe's level of humility, that person too could receive the Torah in all its perfection and completeness — like Moshe.

CHANUKAH GELT

"In your lighting the lights" 8:2

What is the connection between last week's Parsha which tells of the gifts that were brought for the inauguration of the Mishkan, and the beginning of this week's Parsha which describes the mitzva of the Menorah?

At the end of last week's Parsha, when Aaron saw the princes of all the other tribes bringing their offerings for the inauguration of the *Mishkan*, he was depressed. Seemingly, he had been left out.

Hashem consoled him, telling him that his lot would be greater than that of the princes, because he would prepare and light the lamps of the Menorah.

Why was lighting the Menorah greater than bringing offerings? The Midrash answers that offerings can only be brought while the *Beis Hamikdash* is standing, whereas the mitzva of the Menorah is eternal.

But the question returns — when the *Beis Hamikdash* is no longer standing, doesn't the lighting of the Menorah *also* cease?

In reality, the Menorah lives on even after the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, through Aaron's descendants, the Maccabees, who were of the priestly lineage.

The Maccabees' miraculous defeat of the Greeks at the time of Channuka, will be commemorated *eternally* by the kindling of lights. That was the consolation that Hashem gave Aaron: That the Menorah would live on eternally in every Jewish home in the lights of Channukah.

Haftorah: Zecharia 2:14 -4:7

BIO-DEGRADATION

"For behold I will bring you my servant — the flourishing one" (3:8)

Why is The Mashiach referred to as the 'flourishing one'?

Even though today it seems that all remnant of the majesty of the Royal House of David has been uprooted and has vanished into nothingness, nevertheless, the root is still living, hidden and dormant.

Immediately prior to the coming of *Mashiach*, there will be tremendous confusion in the world. Everything will seem to have gone haywire. The natural order will be turned on its head: Age will bow to youth.

Ugliness will be trumpeted as beauty, and what is beautiful will be disparaged as unattractive. Barbarism will be lauded as culture. And culture will be dismissed as worthless.

The hunger of consumerism and the lust for material wealth will grow more and more, and it will find less and less to satisfy its voracity.

Eventually Esav/Materialism will grow so rapacious that it will become its own angel of death. It will literally consume itself and regurgitate itself back out.

However, from this decay, the line of David will sprout, *like a plant that springs forth from no more than the dirt of the ground*. There will be three wars of confusion, and then, at the appropriate moment, the *Mashiach* will appear like a majestic tree flourishing from barren ground, laden with fruit, revealed to all.

Sources:

Kilroy Was Here - The Kotzke Rebbe, Rabbi Yehoshua Bertram

For Keep's Sake - Pirkei Avos 4:2, Rabbi Meir Chadash, Rabbi

Menachem Zvi Goldbaum in 'Moser Derech'

The Best Man For The Job? - Ruach HaChaim

Chanukah Gelt - Ramban

Bio-Degradation - Malbim, Ohr Yesharim in the Hagadah Migdal Ader Hachadash

Fatherly Advice - Tidbits from the Ethics of the Fathers traditionally studied on Summer Shabbos Afternoons

Anyone who repeats something he heard from someone else and says it in his name brings a redemption to the world, as we see that the redemption of the Purim miracle came as a result of Queen Esther telling the king, in the name of Mordechai (Esther 2:22) about the plot to assassinate him.

(Avos 6:6)

Mordechai sanctified the Name of Hashem by demonstrating the loyalty of a Jew to his ruler. The plotters, Bigsan and Teresh, were influential people and there was a danger that if the fickle king

would pardon them they would avenge themselves upon him. It is the will of Heaven that the source of such exemplary behavior or wisdom be publicized so that people will seek to learn from him. In the case of Mordechai and Esther the result was the physical redemption from the genocidal plot of Haman and the spiritual redemption of Jews coming closer to their Father in Heaven.

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