



Parshas Beha'aloscha

For the week ending 19 Sivan 5758
12-13 June 1998

Overview

Aharon 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. The *Levi'im* are commanded that after five years of training they are to serve in the *Mishkan* from ages 30 to 50; afterwards they are to 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 the *mitzvah* of *Pesach Sheini*, allowing a "second chance" to offer the *Korban Pesach* one month later, is detailed. 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 Jewish People, but Yisro returns to Midian. At the instigation of the *Eruv Rav* — the mixed multitude of Egyptians who joined the Jewish People in the Exodus — some 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 Aharon 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

STREET HEATER

"Miriam and Aharon spoke against Moshe regarding the Cushite woman that he had married." (12:1)

Imagine a Native American, who has spent all his life on the reservation in Canyon de Chelly, Arizona, finding himself on the East Side of New York City around 29th and Lex. He walks down the street and stops. His attention is riveted on a nearby window. Straddling the window is a rectangular metal box about three feet long by eighteen inches high. It blasts out hot air, chugging away in a relentless mechanical symphony. He lifts his eyes. Brownstone apartments rear upwards to the sky. And in each and every window he sees the same metal box. Hundreds of them, all belching hot air into the humid Manhattan sky.

He thinks to himself "These white men sure love the heat. It's so hot today — and they still put these contraptions in their windows to heat the street!"

When Miriam found out that Moshe had separated from his wife, she thought that he had become conceited. She thought Moshe viewed himself as being so close to G-d that he had risen beyond a normal marital relationship, that his self-imposed monasticism was a product of an inflated ego. Of course, what would be considered conceit in Moshe, would to us appear humility beyond anything we have ever seen or experienced. We have no parameters to equate our concepts of conceit and humility to Moshe. But, on that exalted level, Miriam thought that Moshe had succumbed to pride.

But how could Miriam have thought that Moshe was acting out of pride? The Torah calls Moshe the "humblest of all men." Surely Miriam knew the Torah's evaluation of Moshe. How could Miriam have even suspected his motives?

Moshe may have been the humblest of all men, but he wasn't a *shlepper*. Being humble doesn't mean

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22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel

972-2-581-0315

fax: 972-2-581-2890

info@ohr.org.il

38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

1-212-213-3100

fax: 1-212-213-8717

RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Aol.com

613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

1-905-886-5730

fax: 1-905-886-6065

Somayach@MSN.com

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Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman

Production Design: Eli Ballon

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walking around hunched over with a miserable look on your face. Moshe knew that he was the king. But he also knew that compared to Hashem, he was nothing. His humility lay in understanding, like no man before or since, exactly how small he was compared to Hashem. It was because Moshe worked on himself to this point that Hashem concretized his awareness by speaking to him "face to face." Then Moshe's humility became visceral. He could "see" how small he was.

Humility is not something you can judge from the outside. There are some people who seem very humble, but inside they are watching everyone watching them be humble. They are starring in their own mental movie called: "A Life of Total Humility." On the other hand, a king may appear to behave in a rather grand fashion, whereas inside he genuinely sees himself as totally unworthy.

Sometimes things aren't quite the way they seem. Sometimes a cool air-conditioner can look like a street heater blasting out its own hot air.

YOU CAN ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU WANT

"Why should we be made less by not offering Hashem's offering in its appointed time among the Children of Israel." (9:6)

You can always get what you want. It all depends on how much you want it. Our Rabbis teach us that according to the way we desire to go — so are we led. If we want to travel the spiritual path, we will find opportunities for spiritual growth opening up all around us. If, however, we want to go in the other direction, we will find a million Technicolor dreams to lose ourselves in. What you want is what you get.

In this week's *Parsha* we learn of the mitzvah of *Pesach Sheni* — "Pesach Two." "Pesach Two" was not a sequel to a "Pesach One." It wasn't that Pesach One was such a big hit that we were given another chance to relieve it all over again. No. It happened that, through no fault of their own, there was a group of people who weren't able to bring the Pesach offering on the 14th of Nissan. They didn't have time to ritually purify themselves before Pesach. They appealed to Moshe and Aharon that they be allowed to join in this great spiritual experience. Such was their overwhelming desire for spirituality that G-d made them the agents by which a whole passage in the Torah, a whole new mitzvah, was revealed. The mitzvah of *Pesach Sheni*.

The world is a reflection of the Torah. Hashem "re-wrote" the Torah just to allow these people the experience of bringing the Pesach offering. Hashem re-wove the very fabric of reality so that they could be involved in the Pesach experience. He turned the entire order of creation upside down just for them. Such is the power of one who seeks to elevate himself.

Hashem will turn over the world for us — if only we want it enough.

SYMPTOMS AND SYNDROMES

"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Gather to Me seventy men from the elders of Israel.'" (11:16)

The waiting room was filled with people, most of them wheezing and coughing. It was that time of year again, and doctors' waiting rooms across the country were filled with flu patients just like this one.

In the corner of the room sat a teenage boy. He was coughing a little, although a little less than most others in the room.

The surgery door swung open and a harassed looking man in his mid-fifties shouted from the doorway:

"Next!" An old lady was just getting to her feet when the doctor's eye alighted on the young boy. "You!" he shouted, "You! In here immediately!" The doctor brought the young boy into the room and sat him down. Behind the closed door there could clearly be heard the sound of an old lady remonstrating that she had lost her turn, and these young people had no respect for the old....

After a minute or two with his stethoscope, the doctor picked up the phone and ordered an ambulance. "Don't worry" he said to the boy, "you're going to be fine. We've caught it in time."

A good doctor is someone who can read the symptoms of his patient like a book.

When the Jewish People tired of the manna, they developed a craving for meat. They cried to Moshe. Moshe turned to Hashem and asked "Where shall I get meat to give to this entire people?"

Hashem's reply was that Moshe should gather together 70 men from the elders of Israel, to take them to the Tent of Meeting and have them stand there together with Moshe.

Ostensibly, this was a strange reply. Hashem planned to give the Jewish People the meat they craved. So, wouldn't Moshe have been better served by gathering seventy *ritual slaughterers (shochtim)* rather than seventy elders?

The craving for meat, for the physical things of this world, is no more than a physical expression of a spiritual lacking. The desire for meat wasn't the disease — it was only the symptom. The Jewish People said that they craved meat, but in reality their souls craved spirituality.

Our Rabbis teach us that someone who loves money will not be satisfied with money, he will want more. They also say that someone who loves Torah will not be satisfied with the Torah he has amassed, he will want more. The desire for money is no more than the

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physical expression of a spiritual lacking — the desire for Torah.

It's a good doctor who can tell the difference between the symptom and the disease.

Sources:

Street Heater - The Malbim, Rabbi C.Z. Senter
You Can Always Get What You Want - Rabbi Yosef Tzeinvort
heard from Rabbi Yehoshua Bertram
Symptoms and Syndromes - Rabbi S.R. Hirsch heard from Rabbi Mordechai Pitom

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 a 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.

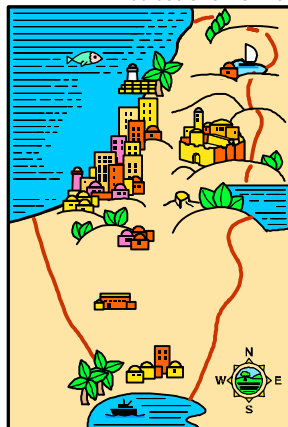
The hunger of consumerism and the lust for material wealth will grow more and more, and it will find less and less to satisfy its voracity. Eventually Esav/Rome/Materialism will grow so rapacious that it will become its own angel of death. It will literally consume itself and regurgitate itself back out.

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

Malbim, Ohr Yesharim in the Haggadah Migdal Eder Hachadash

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael



MITZVAH MONOPOLY

Eretz Yisrael is sanctified above all lands. How is the sanctity expressed? The barley for the *omer* offering on Pesach, the wheat for the two-loaves offering on Shavuot, and the *bikkurim* brought to the *kohen* in the *Beis Hamikdash* from the first produce of the seven species (mentioned in the Torah in connection with the blessing of the Land) must all be grown only in *Eretz Yisrael*.

Masechta Kelim 1:6

Eretz Yisrael is pure and its *mikvaos* are pure.

Masechta Mikvaos 8:1

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