

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Fish Tale

Complaining was a trademark of the Chosen People from the time they left Egypt. Many complaints were understandable. This week, however, the complaints were inexplicable. They were fed up with the heavenly Manna and they began to reminisce about the good old days back in Egypt when they ate free fish.

Numbers 11:5: "We remember the fish that we received in Egypt free of charge; we also remember the gourds, cucumbers, onions and garlic. Yet here (in the desert) our life is parched, all we have is the Manna."

The commentaries question where the free fish came from. After all weren't they slaves? Ramban suggests that perhaps the fish were given to slaves who were fishermen's apprentices. Some are bothered. "Why would that be considered free? Being forced into any job, and then getting paltry remuneration, is not considered free fish."

Perhaps the secret of free fish lies in the Plague of Blood. The Torah tells us that during the first of the Ten Plagues all the Egyptian waters turned to blood. "All the fish died and the rivers stank." (Exodus 7:21) If all the fish died, then there was plenty of free fish! I would like to propose that those fish may have been the free fish that evoked fond memories in the complaining Jews.

It has always amazed me. The Jews were given miraculous bread that, according to the Talmud, had the supernatural ability to conform to any taste that was imagined by the eater. Yet, the golus minded Jew yearned for his rotten fish with a little onion and garlic on the side.

Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski of Pittsburgh tells the story of the small European shtetl that heard about a marvelous new invention—the locomotive. The government was offering to put a station in their town, but taxes would have to be raised. Skeptical about the concept of a horseless carriage, they sent an emissary

to a nearby town that had just completed a set of tracks on which the new-fangled, modern miracle was to travel. His mission was to verify the existence of such a machine and explain its mechanics to the entire town. They would then vote whether or not to accept its presence.

He returned home in awe. He had learned the mechanics and principles of the machine and was set on convincing the townsfolk to accept the offer. Equipped with diagrams and working models of the train, he explained the concepts of a steam engine. For hours he explicated and demonstrated the workings of the internal combustion engine, pistons and levers. Finally, almost everyone agreed. The train was a true marvel and would be a great benefit to the town.

One man had other ideas. "Bah! Feh! It's all a trick! How can something run without horse. It just can't be!"

The emissary started the whole display over again. He showed the skeptic a working model. He even boiled water and fascinated the crowd showing a model train actually move. Even the doubter was shaking his head in amazement. "It's truly amazing," he nodded in submission, "but tell me, just where do you attach the horses?"

Many people have their ideas set. You can offer and even give them vast improvements in lifestyle, knowledge, and understanding, yet they long for an empty world. They will not ponder the blessing of Torah due to the responsibilities that accompany it. They are content as slaves with mundane fare while shirking the lofty vision that accompanies heavenly food. That attitude stems from dissatisfaction and lack of vision. It is the stuff that complainers are made of.

When one wants to complain, and remain in his accustomed mode, even Utopia will not fit the demand. Delicious, ever-satisfying Manna will be shunned. The complainer will even long for the old rotten fare. He will imagine how delicious it was as he ignores the true goodness that he fails to appreciate. © 1996 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and torah.org

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

Shortly after the new set of 70 Elders were "inaugurated" with prophecy that came through Moshe (Bamidbar 11:25), and two additional would-be Elders (Eldud and Maidud) experienced their

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Moras Chaya Fayga Bas R' Yaacov Yosef A"H
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Mr. and Mrs. Itzy Weisberg and family

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own prophecy (11:26, see Rashi), Miriam and Aharon confronted their brother, Moshe, about his having separated from (and, Rashi adds, divorcing) his wife Tziporah (12:1). Rashi tells us that the latter was a direct result of the former, as Miriam and Tziporah were present when Moshe was told that "Eldud and Maidud were prophesizing in the camp," about which Tziporah expressed empathy for their wives, as these new prophets would have to separate from them just as her husband (Moshe) had separated from her. Miriam subsequently discussed this with Aharon, and then, together, they confronted Moshe about it.

What was their argument against Moshe? From the context of their words (12:2, see Rashi), it is apparent that they thought that even if Moshe received prophecy from G-d, he need not separate from his wife. After all, they were also prophets, and still lived with their spouses! So why did Moshe insist on separating from (and divorcing) his? G-d Himself answered on Moshe's behalf (12:4-10), explaining that Moshe's prophecy was on a much higher level than theirs, including needing to be ready for prophecy at all times (see Rashi on 12:4). Whereas all other prophets must prepare themselves before receiving each prophecy (and therefore had some "down-time" during which they could lead normal lives before preparing for the next possible prophecy), Moshe had to be constantly "prophecy-ready," so had decided (at Sinai) to separate from his wife.

Which leaves us with several questions. Hadn't Moshe explained the situation to Tziporah before divorcing her? Not just that prophecy demands separation, but that his always-being-ready-to-receive-prophecy-if-needed was unique, so that even if other prophets could stay married, he couldn't. If he did, then she should have known that Eldud and Maidud could stay with their wives, and wouldn't have commented to Miriam in the first place! And if she wasn't told (and

didn't realize) that only Moshe's level of prophecy demanded separation, shouldn't she have asked Miriam how *she* was able to stay married? Or why Aharon hadn't divorced *his* wife. Or at least have been sensitive enough not to bring up the subject with the still-married Miriam!

Besides, the comment expressing empathy for the prophets' wives should have come earlier, when the 70 Elders received their prophecy. Why was the empathy saved for these two wives, rather than for the other 70 wives? The Maskil le'Dovid says that the 70 Elders only prophesized that one time (see Rashi on 11:25), while Eldud and Maidud continued to prophesize (as the verb in 11:27 is in the present tense, "are prophesizing," implying that they continued to receive prophecy). Therefore, Tziporah knew that the 70 new Elders could maintain their relationships, but empathized with the wives of Eldud and Maidud. While this certainly answers this last question, it does not address why Tziporah didn't realize that Moshe's prophecy was above everyone else's, thereby requiring the separation that no other prophet, including Eldud or Maidud, had to undergo.

There is a discussion in the midrashim about why Eldud and Maidud didn't come to the Mishkan with the other 70 Elder candidates. Since there are 12 Tribes, there could not be an equal representation of Elders among them (as $6 \times 12 = 72$). Moshe (according to some midrashic sources with the help of Betzalel, the master-builder of the Mishkan) devised a means of determining which Tribes would not have a full complement of 6 Elders. He took 70 pieces of paper and wrote "Elder" on them, and took two pieces of paper and left them blank (see Rashi on 11:26). He would then have the top 6 candidates from each Tribe come forth and pick one piece of paper of the (shuffled) 72. If it said "Elder" it meant that he was chosen to be one, but if it were blank he was not. However, only 70 of the 72 candidates came forth to draw these pieces of paper; Eldud and Maidud stayed away. Some understand their reluctance to come forth as a fear of not being chosen, while Rashi follows the opinion that they felt they did not deserve the honor, so never went. Despite this (or, perhaps, precisely because of their humility), they received prophecy "in the camp," where they were.

Tziporah knew that they had not intended to receive the prophecy that had been promised to the new Elders (see 11:17), but experienced it anyway. If they hadn't expected to receive prophecy, they must not have prepared for it, yet they still received it. This was remarkably similar to Moshe's being able to receive prophecy without any specific preparation. Therefore, Tziporah thought that they would also have to separate from their wives. She knew that other prophets, including Aharon and Miriam, could stay married, and that Moshe's level (and constancy) was unique (and the source for his need to separate from her). However, she

thought that the "sudden" prophecy that Eldud and Maidud experienced put them in a similar category, and therefore felt for their wives. Miriam heard this, but (apparently) didn't (fully) understand what Tziporah had meant.

Eldud and Maidud's "sudden" prophecy may have been a one-time thing, with all subsequent prophecies requiring the same special preparations that every other prophet must go through. It is very likely that they had actually prepared for this prophecy too, but didn't come to the "Elder drawing" because they felt that, even after this preparation, they weren't worthy of the position. Nevertheless, their preparation yielded their unexpected prophecy, preparation that would be needed for any future prophecies. Tziporah, though, hadn't realized this, and by expressing her empathy for their wives, made Miriam aware of why Moshe had separated from her. © 2005 Rabbi D. Kramer

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Daf HaShavua

by Rabbi Hershi Vogel, Ealing Synagogue

My great uncle, the righteous and illustrious Rabbi Mendel Futerfas, spent 14 years in Soviet hard labour camps. One evening, all of his fellow prisoners were depressed. Each one lamented his own fate. Before being arrested, one was a doctor. His career had been outstanding, when suddenly he was arrested for dealing on the black market. Another was an official in the Communist Party. He had held the keys to power in his hand, but then, out of the blue, orders from on high had come to send him to a hard labour camp. Another had been a professor. He had led a quiet, but peaceful academic life with his family until one of his papers had been termed counter-revolutionary. Now look where they were. Each of them had a sorry story contrasting his previous position with his present state.

"And what were you before you were arrested?" they asked Rav Mendel. "Before I was arrested, I was a Chassid. And now I am a Chassid," he answered. "Imprisonment can't change that. Your civilian lives were all dependent on external factors", he told his comrades. "Therefore, you feel acute pain when they are gone. My life has always been focused on the internal, and therefore, I am not crushed even in these harsh settings."

This week's Torah reading describes the preparations for, and the initial stages of, the journey of the Jewish people through the desert after having camped at Mount Sinai for more than a year.

At Sinai, the Jews received the Torah and soon afterwards constructed the Sanctuary there. Yet, our people did not rest on their laurels. Rather, they stayed in the desert where G-d provided everything; they set on a mission- to journey to the Holy Land, Eretz Yisrael.

The desert is barren and desolate, yet the Jews transformed it, albeit temporarily, into a settled land, a place where crops, trees and even flowers grew. They did not travel empty handed. They took the Torah that they had been given and the Sanctuary that they had constructed. G-d's presence, which rested within the Sanctuary, brought about these positive changes in the surroundings in which they lived.

The Baal Shem Tov explains that the Journeys of the Jewish People through the wilderness are reflected in the journeys of every individual through life.

Some of the phases that we pass through may appear barren. Nevertheless, we must appreciate that this is only the external setting in which we are placed. It should not reflect our inner state-for as we know, G-d is with us at all times, and the Torah is with us in all surroundings.

This fills our lives with inner meaning and depth, which in turn allows us to be outward oriented. We can change the environments in which we live and cultivate their growth and development.

Focusing on the internal empowers us so that when we are faced with challenges our inner ambitions to grow and prosper both spiritually and physically will not be crushed. It is up to us all to create that kind of environment and to recognise that we are on a journey towards the ultimate redemption where we will arrive at our final destination-the Holy Land, Eretz Yisrael.

LEINING MATTERS

by Rabbi Geoffrey Shisler, New West End Synagogue

WHY IS THERE A DOT OVER THE Hey Of ReChoKaH? Here is a very interesting example of an occasion where a dot over a letter helps us to understand a halacha.

The Torah here enlightens us concerning a man who was unable to fulfil the mitzvah of bringing the Paschal lamb offering on Pesach. He is given permission to bring it a month later and thereby observe a Pesach Sheni. Two possible reasons are given why he might have been prevented from offering the lamb at the right time. He was possibly in a state of ritual impurity, having recently been in contact with a dead body, and was therefore forbidden from coming into the Temple precincts or, alternatively, he was BeDeReCh ReChoKaH 'on a distant journey.'

In accordance with the rule that a dot over a letter indicates that that letter should be ignored, Rashi advises that this should be read as BeDeReCh ReChoK. In this case, the word 'distant' is associated, not with the journey, but with the word 'man' at the beginning of the sentence, i.e, it is not that the distance is far, but rather that the man is far.

This permits the interpretation that the man has arrived too late. He might be physically near. Indeed, he might even be just outside the forecourt where the lambs were being slaughtered. However, since he did not get there in time, he might just as well be a long way

away. Nevertheless, he would be permitted to bring his offering a month later. © 2005 Produced by the Rabbinical Council of the United Synagogue - London (O) Editor Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, emailed by Rafael Salasnik

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Moshe (Moses) had many qualities that we should emulate. Yet, the quality that he was possibly the most famous for was his humility. This week's portion tells us of this unparalleled humility. In the words of the Torah, "now the man Moses was very humble above all people." (Numbers 12:3) How does one attain this most important quality?

Maimonides argues that in life one should always try for the middle road, the golden mean. Humility, however, is so difficult to achieve, that Maimonides feels that one should try to go to the extreme, becoming absolutely self-effacing. Unable to reach that level, Maimonides argues one will fall short and automatically reach the middle level.

By taking a closer look at the verse from the Torah, we find another approach to humility. At first blush, Moshe's actions seem to reinforce the suggestion that he was extraordinarily humble. After all, when Moshe is told that two men, Eldad and Medad were prophesying in the midst of the camp, he was not upset. Indeed, rather than seeing Eldad and Medad as threats, Moshe declares "would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His spirit upon them." (Numbers 11:29)

It appears that here Moshe is expressing deep humility and, therefore, declares "let others be prophets just as I am."

But a closer look may suggest an opposite idea. Moshe may have recognized his limitations and, thus, was able to step back and allow others to assume prophetic leadership. In a certain sense this gracious act may have reflected his self confidence, rather than his meekness. Assured of his own capabilities, he was not threatened by Eldad or Medad.

Herein lies an important message. Humility doesn't mean thinking little of oneself. All of us created in the image of G-d should feel a sense of self worth in our abilities to succeed. It is this confidence that gave Moshe the inner strength to share leadership with others.

From this perspective, humility is the assessing of oneself in relationship to G-d. It is within that comparison that one recognizes how small one is. In fact, the closer one is to G-d, and Moshe was the closest to Him, the more one recognizes one's finitude in comparison to G-d's infinite nature.

A story teaches this lesson. The great Hafez Chaim was among the humblest of people. Once, on a train, a fellow passenger, who did not recognize this famous rabbi, lauded the Hafez Chaim to his face. The Hafez Chaim responded that he knew him personally

and knew that he actually had many weaknesses. The passenger was outraged and slapped him. When coming to the next town, and realizing who he had slapped, he begged the great rabbi for forgiveness.

"No" responded the Hafez Chaim. "There is no need to apologize. I was wrong in belittling myself.

The upshot: humility should not be associated with putting oneself down. But rather this valuable quality should emerge from the recognition that as much as we, created in the image of G-d, can do, it is but a fraction of the endless power of the Almighty.

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RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

Towards the end of our Biblical reading, we find a very strange dialogue between Miriam and Aaron, the elder brother and sister of Moses: "And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite (Midianite) woman he had taken to wife (and divorced-Rashi)... And they said, 'Did the Lord speak only to Moses? Did He not also speak to us?'" (Numbers 12:1,2). What are his siblings criticizing Moses for, and what do they mean by insisting that G-d spoke to them as well as to their younger brother?

I believe that this text can become clarified if we properly understand the general name for the study of our Mystical tradition, the "Kabbalah." The Hebrew term kabbalah means acceptance, and for our great mystical teachers, everything upon our ability to properly accept. Rav David Aaron, the founder and director of Israelite, tells of the first time he came into a class given by a well-known mystical thinker in Jerusalem. The teacher summoned Rav David, and held out an apple—presumably for him to take. Rav David put his hand over the apple, only to find that the teacher removed his hand with the apple. This procedure repeated itself a number of times, with Rav David attempting to lift the apple from the mystic's hand, and the mystic almost "teasing" him by removing his hand again and again. The other students began to laugh; one of them whispered to David not to grab or take the apple, but rather to accept it in his open and cupped hand just as one accepts the Kiddush goblet, filled with wine, right before the blessing of sanctification. That's what David did, and the mystic-teacher immediately placed the apple in his cupped hand and smiled. So he learned the first lesson of Jewish mysticism: it all depends on one's ability to properly accept. And whatever proper acceptance means, it begins with the understanding that one dare never grasp only for oneself, but one's hand must always be ready to receive, and must remain open and ready to share one's bounty with anyone else who may wish to partake of it.

In the Biblical portion of Balak, we shall read of Balaam's talking donkey, who teaches him a crucially important lesson (Numbers 22:21-35). Rabbenu Zadok

of Lubin(known as the P'ri Zaddik) explains that the Bible is attempting to teach us that G-d is constantly sending out "Divine Rays of Splendor" which are waiting for human beings to receive them; we must merely have the properly attuned antennae to receive the electric waves of transmissions which are in the very atmosphere all around us.

Rabbenu Zadok proves his point by recounting how he was once walking along a desolate road when he saw a peasant farmer walking towards him carrying a large bale-full of hay; the bale turned over, the hay fell to the ground, and the hapless farmer asked the Rabbi to help him lift his produce. "I'm sorry but I can't," answered Rabbenu Zadok, already feeling weak and thirsty from his travels. "No, you mean you won't," responded the peasant farmer. Rabbenu Zadok immediately began helping the Gentile, all the time thanking him for the invaluable message he had taught him. Whenever we say that we can't, we really mean that we won't; if there is a strong enough will, virtually anything becomes possible. Apparently, G-d speaks through donkeys, through farmers, through children... We must really develop within ourselves the finely honed antennae to receive the Divine transmissions.

This is the deep meaning of the Biblical verse, "These words the Lord spoke unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice which never ceased (Targum)" (Deut 5:19). The Divine Voice heard at Sinai constantly continues to communicate; it is up to us to develop our minds and our souls sufficiently to be able to accept the Divine waves or rays.

Let us now return to Moses' siblings, who couldn't understand how this great prophet could have divorced his Midianite wife Zipporah. The great philosopher -- legalist of the 12th Century, Maimonides, explains it as follows (Laws of the Foundations of Torah, 6): The Almighty, in an attempt to raise the spiritual level of the Israelites and prepare them for the Revelation at Sinai, instructed them to separate from their spouse for three days prior to the Appearance of the Almighty atop the Mount. At the conclusion of the Revelation, G-d instructs His prophet, "go now and tell them to return to their tents (and their wives)" (Deut 5: 27,28). Miriam therefore tells Aaron that Moses, too, should have returned to his wife Zipporah. After all, was not the commandment to return to the natural familial situation after the Revelation given to everyone-including Moses!? What Miriam did not understand was that Moses was sui generis, unique and different "in kind" from everyone else, and even from every subsequent prophet. G-d specifically singled out Moses and separated him from the general return to the family tents when He said to him, "But you stand here with Me and I shall (constantly) speak to you...." (Deut. 5:28). "All other prophets had their 'prophetic moments of Divine communication,' either in a dream or in a vision; Moses prophesized when awake and standing... the

holy spirit garbed and enveloped him, whenever he desired it... He was constantly prepared and ready for Divine communication, just like a heavenly angel. Therefore the other prophets would return to their homes and to their bodily, physical needs once the spirit of prophecy departed from them, whereas Moses could not return to his wife, but had to separate himself from her forever, because his mind was constantly bound up with the "mind" of the Rock of Eternity, whose Divine glory never left him..." (Maimonides, ibid).

Moses was in a continuous state of prophecy, always attuned to the Divine signals of emission; he was an eternal "receiving" (Kabbalah) station, a receptor of the Divine rays of splendor. He was the mekabel, mekubal, par excellence. © 2005 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

When Yehoshua hears Eldad and Meidad acting as prophets within the camp, he is upset. "My Master, Moshe, put them in prison!" [Bamidbar 11:28]. Moshe responds with mild criticism. "Are you jealous for me? If only all of the nation of G-d would be prophets, if G-d would spread His spirit over them" [11:29]. Why was Yehoshua upset, and why did this matter not bother Moshe at all?

The explanation can be seen from the way Yehoshua is described in the Torah portion, as "Moshe's servant" [11:28]. This title is given to Yehoshua in two other places in the Torah, and in both cases the subject is the way that Yehoshua related to Moshe's unique prophetic ability. The first time is when Moshe climbed Mount Sinai, at the end of the Torah portion of Mishpatim. "And Moshe and Yehoshua his servant rose, and Moshe climbed up the mountain of G-d. And he said to the elders, wait here until we return to you." [Shemot 24:13-14]. Even though Moshe went up the hill by himself, these instructions differentiated between Moshe and Yehoshua on one hand ("until we return") and the elders ("wait here").

The second time was after the sin of the Golden Calf, and it was similar in nature. "Moshe took the Tent and placed it outside, away from the camp, and he called it the Tent of Meeting. And it happened that anybody who wanted to consult with G-d would go out to the Tent of Meeting... And when Moshe entered the Tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the Tent, and talk to Moshe... And his servant, Yehoshua Bin Nun, a youth, would not move away from the tent." [Shemot 33:7-11]. One of the results of the sin of the Golden Calf was that Moshe distanced himself from the camp and went alone to speak to the Almighty. Only Yehoshua stayed with him, dedicated and close by.

This explains why Yehoshua found it hard to accept that the phenomenon of prophecy was expanding among the rest of the people. Up to then, Yehoshua had viewed prophecy as a unique trait belonging to Moshe, his beloved and adored mentor. He felt that being separated from the camp was a necessary condition for prophecy. But now seventy new men started to prophesize, and this new phenomenon even spread out, within the camp. And that explains why Yehoshua said the men should be put into prison. He felt that the phenomenon should be stopped, since it showed disrespect for Moshe's honor and glory.

Moshe understood very well exactly what was bothering Yehoshua, and that is why he asked, "Are you jealous for me?" As Rashi explains, his question is, "Are you showing the jealousy that I might show?" Moshe therefore explains that he does not see prophecy as his personal and exclusive privilege. In fact, it is upsetting that until this point he was the only person at a high enough level to be a prophet on a regular basis. From the ideological point of view, "If only all of the nation of G-d would be prophets, if G-d would spread His spirit over them."

It should be noted that Yehoshua did learn his lesson, and when he became the leader of the nation he was careful to include the elders in his decisions. "And Yisrael worshipped G-d all the days of Yehoshua and all the days of the elders" [Yehoshua 24:31]. This corresponds to the beginning of the Tractate of Avot, "Moshe received the Torah from Sinai & passed it on to Yehoshua, and Yehoshua gave it to the elders..." [1:1].

Miriam, Guardian of Yisrael

by Aliza Lavi

The Torah portion of Behaalotecha ends with what happened to Miriam after she complained about Moshe. "And Miriam and Aharon talked about Moshe, with respect to the dark woman that he had taken, for he had taken a dark woman" [Bamidbar 12:1]. Miriam criticized her brother because he left his wife. This was not the first time that Miriam had expressed criticism of this same act. "'And a man went from the house of Levi' [Shemot 2:1]. Where did he go? Rabbi Yehuda Bar Zavina said, he followed his daughter's advice. We have been taught: Amram was the leader of the generation, when Pharaoh decreed, 'Every boy that is born shall be thrown into the Nile' [Shemot 1:22], he said: We are laboring in vain! So he divorced his wife. And all the other men divorced their wives. His daughter said to him: Father, your decree is worse than that of Pharaoh. He made a decree against the males, but you have made a decree against the males and the females... So Amram married his wife again, and they all took their wives back." [Sotta 12].

Thus, Miriam's character, as an independent person who has an effect on others, could be seen at a very early age. Miriam's criticism of her father led directly to Moshe's birth and thus influenced the

continued existence of the people of Yisrael. In her new criticism about the way Moshe behaved, Miriam remained true to her principles, insisting that the continuation of the nation is a supreme value to be protected under all conditions. According to the Midrash, Moshe left his wife Tzipora. Miriam's constant fear, from the days of her childhood in Egypt, that the concept of separation would be adopted by the entire community and thus cause harm to the continuation of the nation, together with her sympathy for her sister-in-law's distress, were what led her to voice her criticism. In her words, she compared her status and that of Aharon to that of Moshe. "And they said, Has G-d spoken only to Moshe? Hasn't He spoken to us too?" [Bamidbar 12:2].

Miriam was not punished for her criticism, and she was certainly not punished for her determined will to guard the future of the nation. She was not scolded for her earlier complaint when the leaders of the nation left their wives and for her insistence that the people return to proper family living. Rather, her sin was that she did not take into account the unique and special circumstances surrounding Moshe. She had predicted his birth by prophecy, saying, "My mother will give birth to a son who will save Yisrael" [Sotta 13a]. But she did not understand her brother's unique status, different from any other human being, even among the most exalted chosen people. In the end, it was Miriam's criticism that led to the explicit description of Moshe's unique role: "My servant Moshe is not like this, he is a trusted visitor throughout my house. I speak to him mouth to mouth... and he can see the image of G-d" [Bamidbar 12:7-8].

It is interesting to note that the nation delayed its journey during the seven days that Miriam was separated from them, while she endured her punishment. The nation, about which she was so concerned, waited with her until her atonement was complete. "The way that a person treats others is the way that he himself is treated" [Mishna Sotta 1:7].

AISHDAS SOCIETY

Aspaqlaria

by Micha Berger

Hashem chose Aharon and his descendants to serve Him as Kohanim. It seems strange. If anyone should be chosen to be the first Kohen wouldn't it be Moshe? Wasn't he the Eved Hashem—the greatest servant of the Almighty?

The Gemara attributes to Moshe the attitude of "let the law uproot mountains." He lived to the ideal, teaching by setting an example of what man can become. He was able to separate himself from everything earthly, and single-mindedly pursue the higher ideal. Moshe begins his final speech to his people with the words "Hear O skies and I shall speak; listen O earth to the words of my mouth." Rashi

comments that Moshe had to use a stronger language in speaking to the earth, as he was a man who was more heavenly than earthly. He was further from the earth, so it had to listen more carefully.

In contrast, Hillel (Mishnah Avos 1:12) enjoins us to learn from Aharon, who he describes as as a "lover of peace and a pursuer of peace. A lover of Mankind who brought them close to Torah." Aharon represents another kind of teacher, one who is part of the people, and works from within the community.

Though society needs both a Moshe, an ideal to aspire to, and an Aharon, it is the Aharon who is chosen for the Kehunah, the priesthood. In order to represent the masses in the Avodah, you must be part of them. In this week's parashah, Hashem tells Moshe to instruct Aharon "Biha'aloschah es haneiros—when you cause the candles to go up". This is a very odd way to phrase it. More straightforward would be bihadlikchah—when you light the candles.

One of the explanations Rashi offers for this strange terminology is that it refers to a law about how the menorah is lit. One may not light the menorah directly, by letting a fire touch the wick. Instead the Kohen holds a fire close to the lamp, and the wick bursts into flame from the heat.

This is a beautiful metaphor for how the Kohen teaches. He doesn't instruct directly. Instead, he loves mankind, and by bringing the light of his example close to the masses, brings them to emulate.

The same is even more true of the Jewish People's job to be a Mamleches Kohanim viGoy Kadosh—a Kingdom of Priests and A Holy Nation. We do not spread the truths of ethical monotheism to the world by prosletization, in fact it is asur to teach Torah to non-Jews. Rather, by striving for kedushah in the midst of the nations, we can teach by example. © 1995 Micha Berger & AishDas.org

RABBI LIPMAN PODOLSKY

Yeshivat Hakotel

How does the mechanech (educator) know that he has succeeded in his mission? When he bids farewell to his students, how can he rest assured that he did all he could to provide them with a comprehensive, well-rounded, Torah education? These questions emanate from the very neshama of any good mechanech. The answer is not simply important; it is quintessential.

The title of this week's parsha begs explanation. Usually, when we ignite a fire, we describe it as "lighting" a fire. Hence, the Hebrew "I'hadlik" would have been most appropriate to describe the kindling of the Menorah. But our Torah chose to use the word "Beha'aloscha"—"When you cause to ascend." What does ascent have to do with lighting a fire?

Rashi clarifies: "... for [the Kohen] must continue to kindle the Menorah until the flame ascends

on its own accord." It is not sufficient to merely touch the match to the wick. The Kohen must make sure that the flame is self-sustaining. Only then may he withdraw the match. The holy sefarim (books) reveal: The light of the Menorah is symbolic of learning Torah. "For a mitzvah is a candle, and Torah is light (Mishlei 6:23)." Kindling the Menorah, then, is analogous for the teaching of Torah, i.e. chinuch. From the Menorah, we learn how to successfully teach Torah.

The mechanech may not simply "touch the match", as it were, to his charges, for then the fire of enthusiasm will quickly wane. Rather, he must continue to inspire his students with the flame of Torah until they become capable of sustaining their own fire. Then and only then can the mechanech consider his mission accomplished.

If the student continues to grow, to build on what he or she learned and to carry on striving for excellence, the mechanech (and the student) has succeeded. But if, chas v'shalom, the embers slowly die down, then the year in Eretz Yisrael was a nice experience, but chinuch it was not.

May Hashem help us keep the flame burning, growing ever higher, ever brighter, till the day when we will joyously greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu, soon in our days! © 2001 Rabbi L. Podolsky and Yeshivat Hakotel

RABBI YAAKOV HABER

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“And when you go to war against the enemy who oppresses you, you shall blow the trumpets, & you shall be remembered before Hashem, your G-d, & you will be delivered from your enemies" (B'ha'alos'cha 10:9). With this sentence, the Torah comm&s us to sound the trumpets in a time of communal tzara, distress. (The trumpets are also blown in the Beis HaMikdash in the context of the offering of communal korbanos, but that is not our focus in this article.) Both Rambam (Hilchos Ta'aniyos 1:1) & Ramban (Hasagos L'Seifer HaMitzvot I'HaRambam, Mitzas 'Asei 5) enumerate this comm&ment as one of the 613 mitzvos. However, interestingly, whereas the Torah directs us only to blow the trumpets, "vaharei'osem bachatzo'tz'ros", Rambam adds "liz'ok ul'hari'a", "to cry out & to blow", & Ramban similarly adds "liz'ok l'fanav bi'tfila uvi'tru'a", "to cry out before Him with prayer & the trumpet-call". In the koteret, or introduction, to Hilchos Ta'aniyos, the Rambam formulates the mitzva as "lits'ok lifnei Hashem b'chol eis tzara g'dola shelo tavo 'al ha'tsibbur", "to cry out before G-d at [the time of] every great tragedy which should never come to [a euphemism for 'befalls'] the congregation." The blowing of the trumpets is omitted entirely! Apparently, the Rishonim understood the Torah's comm&ment as an obligation to cry out in prayer to G-d when tragedy threatens; the trumpets are just a vehicle of "musical prayer" to be accompanied by

prayer of the lips as well. Rav Soloveitchik zt"l (see Y'mei Zikaron) explained this theme of "prayer without words" as representing the motif that often we do not know adequately how to express our needs & we just cry out to G-d as a child would to his parent. He applied a similar analysis to the blowing of the shofar on Rosh HaShana. (See Seifer HaChinuch (384) for an alternative understanding of the nature of the mitzva to sound the trumpets.)

It would appear from the simple reading of the formulation of the p'sukim, as well as that of Rambam & Ramban that this comment applies specifically to a communal tzara. However, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (O.C. 2:25) as well as Seifer HaChinuch (433) seems to have understood that it applies even to an individual tzara. The students of the Brisker Rav, Rav Velvel Soloveitchik zt"l, record that their teacher used to constantly recite the passuk, "lishuat'cha kivisi Hashem", "I await your salvation, Hashem", in fulfillment of this Divine directive.

Seifer HaChinuch (ibid.) describes how Hashem gave us the gift of being able to pray to him in time of need. "Patach lahem petach ba'asher yasigu kol mish'aloiseihem l'tov," He affords us the opportunity to cry out to Him when we are in need & will often respond positively to our requests when done in earnest. However, he further notes that Hashem commanded such prayer. Even though Rambam & Ramban debate whether or not daily prayer is biblically mandated, all agree that prayer in times of tzara is a mitzva min haTorah based on the verse in our Parasha. How are we to understand the nature of the commandment to pray in times of need? If one chooses not to, what divine concept is he violating? Apparently addressing this very question, Ramban writes in his formulation of this mitzva: "it is a commandment in time of troubles that we should believe that He (may He be blessed & exalted) listens to prayer & it is He who saves from distress through prayer & cries." Seifer HaChinuch formulates the commandment very similarly. It would appear then from Ramban & Seifer HaChinuch that the nature of the commandment to pray is that we are charged by Hashem to actively express belief & reliance (emuna u'bitachon) in the central tenets of our religion: that G-d, as Creator & Mashgiach, Eternal Overseer of the world, listens to prayer & is in ultimate control of all human events. Thus the beseecher, besides engaging in a natural call for help with the hope of a positive reply, by directing his request to the Holy One, expresses his faith & trust in Him. (In the article cited in [1], we have elaborated on this concept even further including one important ramification concerning the obligation of prayer for non-Jews.)

Rambam (ibid. 1:2), in his formulation of this commandment, seems to stress a different, albeit complementary, motif. "& this (act of prayer & sounding the trumpets) is midarkei haTeshuva (of the ways of repentance) that when a tzara occurs & they will cry out

& sound the trumpets concerning it, all will know that because of their evil deeds, evil befell them... & this (awareness & prayer) will cause the removal of the tzara from them." Thus, the Rambam stresses not belief but repentance. Through turning to G-d in times of distress, we recognize the ultimate source of the trouble: our deficiencies in Divine service. The heartfelt prayer serves as an impetus for greater introspection & correction of spiritual flaws, which in turn would lead to a Divine repeal of the decree causing the tragedy.

After almost five years of intifada-with thousands of terrorist attacks against our fellow Jews in Israel claiming over a thousand Jewish lives & with attacks & attempts at attacks continuing through the present, in two months time, thousands of Jews are slated for removal from their homes in Chevel 'Aza, the Gaza Strip. This article is certainly not the forum to discuss the correctness of this political decision. However, even by the rosier of predictions such action would lead to: an increase in terrorism at least in the short term; drastic emotional & psychological effects on those Jews removed & many others as well; &, of course, the very tragedy of having to evacuate sections of our Holy Land even if deemed politically necessary. Many other detrimental consequences are also anticipated at least in the short term. Even for those who feel that in the current environment the plan is a correct course of action, this time period, coupled with the backdrop of the ongoing intifada, certainly qualifies as an 'Eis Tzara! It therefore behooves all of us, in addition to strengthening other aspects of 'avodas Hashem-as well as perhaps other modes of expressing support & encouragement to acheinu B'nei Yisrael living in the communities slated for evacuation-to turn our eyes & hearts to shamayim & pour out our words of tefila to the Almighty for salvation, assistance & Divine protection in this very difficult time period. Whether by means of recital of T'hilim, extra concentration or even insertion of additional relevant requests in those parts of the Sh'mone 'Esrei dealing with salvation from trouble-such as the blessings of "R'ei na v'anyeinu", "Shm'a koleinu", & "Es Tzemach Dovid avd'cha", or intense focus on tachanun & specifically "V'Hu Rachum" on Mondays & Thursdays which we return to saying soon, we must increase our beseeching of the "Av HaRachamim" in this crucial juncture in the history of K'lal Yisrael & the Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael.

The dual motifs presented by Rambam & Ramban, those of 'Emuna & T'shuva, should guide us during these trying times. In the words of the prophet Isaiah (62:1): "L'ma'an Tzion lo echeshe ul'ma'an Yerushalayim lo eshкот 'ad yeitsei kanoga tsidka vishuata k'lapid yiv'ar", "For the sake of Zion I will not be silent, & for the sake of Jerusalem I will not be quiet, until her righteousness shines brightly, & her salvation is lit up like a torch!" May Hashem fulfill all of our requests l'tova! © 2005 The TorahWeb Foundation