

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The parsha begins with the word b'halotcha which is the verb that precedes the object of the sentence, the candles and lights of the candelabra in the Tabernacle and Temple. Thus the verse in its simple meaning refers to having the flame rise when lighting the candelabra. But the verb b'halotcha literally means "When you rise." And I think that this idea contains an important lesson for all of us. The candelabra in the Temple represents the light of the Torah, of G-d's presence, so to speak in the world. The object of the kohein, the priest of Israel in lighting the candelabra is to spread this divine light throughout Israel and the world and thereby to dispel the darkness of evil and contentiousness that so pervades the world.

However, the lighting of the candelabra was not meant to be merely a mechanical, robotic act. The kohein who performed this task of lighting the candelabra had himself to be first uplifted morally and spiritually. Thus the Torah wrote the verb b'halotcha - when you raise yourself - then you are entitled to light the candelabra for others. A person who is not of high moral character is unlikely to be an effective preacher of morality to others. Those who possess divine light within themselves are capable of producing divine light for others. Judaism is very strict in its view of these matters. A candelabra lit by someone who is unworthy of the task is doomed to flicker and eventually be snuffed out. The candelabra in the Temple had an eternal flame - ner maaravi - associated with it. As such, the achievement of eternity requires the uplifting of one's self on a consistent and permanent basis.

The Talmud goes to great lengths to confirm this basic principle of Jewish thought. The rabbis there stated: "Bedeck yourself first before you attempt to bedeck others." Otherwise, the rabbis warned, when one attempts to tell someone to remove a splinter from one's self, the reply invariably will be to remove the large beam from your own eye. Hypocrisy is the great

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enemy of true faith and morality. One cannot lecture others about splinters while carrying one's own beams around. The rabbis of the Talmud noted that even in their times those who could effectively reprimand others for poor behavior were rare and scarce.

What shall we say therefore about our times? The Mussar movement of nineteenth century Lithuania attempted to raise the moral caliber of Jewish society by emphasizing this very message of b'halotcha. The key to influencing others lay in self-improvement. Leading by example, by soft words and goodness was seen as the correct method for lighting the candelabra and spreading the light of holiness throughout society.

I think that, if ever, now is the time here in our Jewish world to mount such a renewed effort at self-improvement in order to influence our entire world positively. We may not yet possess the Temple and its great candelabra but the idea and lesson that they represented are certainly present here and now as well. Our task is to implement this symbolic lighting of the divine candelabra. © 2006 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory.

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT" A

Summarized by Zev Frimer/Translated by Kaeren Fish

Moshe said: Six hundred thousand foot-soldiers are the people in whose midst I dwell, and You say, 'I shall give them meat and they shall eat for an entire month?! Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to suffice for them? Shall all the fish of the sea be gathered for them, to suffice for them?' (Bamidbar 11:21-22)

Rashi, commenting on these verses, quotes a debate among the Tannaim as to how Moshe's words should be understood (Tosefta Sota 6:4). Rabbi Akiva understands the verses on the literal level, and concludes that Moshe sinned in doubting G-d's ability to provide meat for such a large number of people. Rabbi Shimon, in contrast, asserts that Moshe did not doubt G-d's abilities, but rather argued that it was not appropriate to G-d's honor to supply meat for Bnei

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Yisrael and then to kill them: "Saying, as it were, to a donkey: Take a measure of barley and we shall chop off your head."

Further on, Rashi brings a third interpretation:

"Rabban Gamliel, the son of Rabbi Yehuda ha-Nasi, said:... Since they are merely looking for an excuse to complain, nothing You give them will satisfy them. If you give them beef, they will claim that they wanted mutton; if You give them mutton, they will say that they wanted beef, or poultry, or fish and locusts."

What Moshe is saying, according to this view, is that Bnei Yisrael are complaining not because they actually lack something, but rather because they simply feel like complaining, and therefore it is impossible to satisfy them. Am Yisrael are moaning because that is their nature; they are never satisfied with what they have; they always want more. Hence, argues Moshe, since the problem is rooted in the nature of the people, there can be no solution, unless G-d actually changes their nature for the better.

But G-d does not solve problems by changing human nature. This is one of the foundations of the concept of free will. If G-d were to change man's nature, such that people would fulfill His commandments naturally, there would be no point to the whole system of Divine laws. Rambam emphasizes this point in his Moreh Nevukhim (3:32):

"The nature of human beings is not miraculously altered by G-d. On the basis of this principle it is written, 'If only they had given heart....' And it is because of this that we are given commandments and warnings, and reward and punishment... We do not assert this because we believe that changing the nature of any human individual would be difficult for G-d; rather, it is possible, and He is able to achieve it, but He does not want to, and never will want to-in accordance with the foundations of Torah law. Were it G-d's will to change the nature of each individual to what He wants of him, there would be no point in sending prophets, nor in all of the commandments."

In this context, Rambam makes mention of the verse at the beginning of parashat Beshalach:

"And it was, when Pharaoh sent the nation out, that G-d did not lead them on the road of the land of the Philistines, for it was near; for G-d said, 'Lest the nation

regret it, when they are faced with war, and return to Egypt.'" (Shemot 13:17)

If G-d worried that Bnei Yisrael would return to Egypt at the first hint of war, why did He not change their nature and strengthen their spirit, so that they could approach battle bravely? The answer is that G-d does not change human nature; rather, He lets man deal with reality just as he is.

On the other hand, G-d also knows man's weaknesses. Therefore, although He is not prepared to change man, He will sometimes adjust the environment in which man finds himself, in order to make it easier for him and to influence his choices in a positive direction. G-d did not imbue the nation leaving Egypt with special valor so that they would be better equipped to deal with the war awaiting them; rather, He chose to lead them on a path that would postpone the battle, giving them time to fortify themselves.

The same answer is given by G-d to Moshe in our parasha. Moshe argues that it is impossible to satisfy Bnei Yisrael, because it is their nature always to complain; the only solution is to change their basic character. G-d answers that He does not change man's nature, but He is prepared to alter the environment in which Am Yisrael finds itself, making it a better one:

"G-d descended in a cloud and spoke to him, and He took some of the [Divine] spirit that was upon him, and bestowed it upon the seventy elders. And it was, when the spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, and did not [prophesy] again." (11:25)

G-d gives some of His spirit to the seventy elders, so that they can influence Bnei Yisrael in a positive way. Indeed, we see that the word "meat" (basar) appears in our parasha ten times, and correspondingly the word "spirit" (ruach) also appears ten times. To overcome the materialism of Bnei Yisrael, who complain endlessly about all kinds of material problems, G-d lends them some of His spirit and creates an environment that is based on spirituality, so that the problem of material aspiration will dissipate on its own.

Often, when we encounter problems that seem to arise from a person's character and nature, the solution lies not in trying to change his or her nature, but rather in creating a more positive environment that will cause the problem to disappear on its own. (*This sicha was delivered at seuda shelishit, Shabbat parashat Beha'alotekha 5761 [2001].*)

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“**A**nd Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had taken (to wife); for he had taken an Ethiopian woman (as his wife)" (Numbers 12:1)

Apparently Moses' sister and brother were criticizing him for something regarding his wife; the

traditional commentaries, Targum and Rashi, both agree that they were referring to his Midianite wife Zipporah, who was beautiful (Kushit in Hebrew also has the connotation of beautiful), and whom he had divorced (which is why, they would argue, the Biblical text repeats twice that he had married her past tense). And the heart of their critique comes in the very next verse, "And they said, 'Was it only with Moses that G-d spoke; did He not also speak with us! And G-d heard' (12:2).

It should go without saying that "G-d heard," because G-d hears everything! Hence, the verb "heard" in this context probably means "acquiesced," agreed (as in Lev 10:20). However, immediately following this conversation, the Almighty gives a thundering acclamation of the uniqueness of Moses, his humility and the very special relationship he enjoys with G-d, to whom He speaks "mouth to mouth" and not by any intermediary dream or vision; and of course G-d expresses His anger at the slandering siblings and punishes Miriam (12:5-9). What is the story behind the gossip and which position is G-d really taking?

Maimonides gives us a unique glimpse into his philosophy of prophecy in the interpretation he provides for these verses; and if Maimonides is correct, he helps us to understand both the greatness and weakness of Moses at the same time. Indeed, paradoxically it was Moses' strongest asset which proved to be the source of his most tragic flaw...

In Moses' farewell speech - and charge - to his nation, he recounts the awe - inspiring and miraculous revelation at Sinai, when - in the midst of fire, cloud and heavy mist - they all heard " great voice which did not cease" (Deut 5:1, Targum ad loc), a Divine voice which is continuously audible. And so the Bible declares (Numbers 7:29) "When Moses would enter the Tent of Meeting (of the Sanctuary) to speak with (G-d), he would hear the voice (which emanated from Sinai, interprets Rashi) speaking (to itself, and calling out) to him,... from atop the ark cover... from between the two cherubs..." (Numbers 7:29).

<>Maimonides (Laws of the Foundations of Torah, 6 and Guide to the Perplexed, Part II) explains that the Almighty is constantly emitting Divine messages, much like electric waves (galei teder) always in the atmosphere; the challenge for the individual is to develop his/her mind, heart and soul to reach an extent that they become receiving dishes, that they are able to hear, internalize and transmit these Divine communications.

A prophet is an individual who has developed himself intellectually, spiritually and emotionally to such an extent that he becomes a "receiver" of these messages; however, generally speaking the prophet experiences only certain rare moments of these Divine revelations, after which he "leaves" the intense Divine

Presence, as it were, and rejoins the rest of humanity on earth.

And that was precisely what happened to the entire congregation of Israel on the sixth day of Sivan, seven weeks after their exodus from Egyptian slavery, when they stood around Mount Sinai. Every one heard the Divine voice - each in accordance with his individual capacity as a receptor - after which "Go, tell them to return to their tents," to their wives and families, to the rest of human civilization (Deut 6:27).

Moses, however was in a unique category. His intellectual - spiritual capacity was so finely honed, was so exalted and sublime, that he remained constantly in a state of receiving the Divine communications. In the language of Maimonides, Moses' active intellect was in constant contact with the Divine/Active intellect. And so after G-d tells the rest of Israel to return to their tents, He tells Moses, "But you remain standing here with Me so that I may (continue to) tell you all the commandments, statutes and laws which you must teach them..." (Numbers 6:28).

Moses understood this to mean that he must never return to his tent, that his constant and intense contact with G-d obviated regular human contact, made normal human and even familial relationships impossible. And indeed, Moses was a "man of G-d" rather than a man of the people. Since he spoke to G-d 'mouth to mouth,' he was 'heavy mouthed,' of heavy speech," a "kvad peh," not necessarily one who stuttered but rather one who eschewed "small talk," who had no patience with the all - too - often paltry and petty concerns of average individuals. In the words of the Raibag (Gershonides), the people did not listen to him - especially later on about conquering Israel, - because of his (Moses') impatience with them and heavy-duty Divine service with G-d ("Kotzar ruah and avodah kashah).

Miriam and Aaron didn't understand why Moses never returned to his wife and family after the Revelation, why he divorced Zipporah. They thought that just as G-d told them to return home to their tents, He said the same to Moses. And although G-d did tell Moses to remain with Him, he did not mean for Moses to exclude his family. The Almighty believed that intensive commitment to G-d should lead to intensive commitment to people, and G-d tried to communicate that idea to Moses by speaking to him from between the two cherubs, objects of the ark-cover in the form of a young man and a young woman. Is not the Biblical Scroll called Song of Songs described by Rabbi Akiba as the holy of holies, and does it not compare the human love of husband and wife to the Divine love of G-d and Israel? And G-d commanded the Israelites to "love your friend like yourself, I am the Lord," suggesting that the very foundation of human love lies in the fact that each of us has a part of the Divine within him/her self, so that each of us is inextricably united,

essentially bound up, with the other. (Lev 19:18, Ibn Ezra ad loc).

But G-d also realized that it was precisely Moses' closeness to the Divine that caused him to be impatient with his people, that the prophet's involvement with eternal ideas and ideals of necessity made it difficult for him to accept the people's complaining and backsliding. Hence G-d chastises Miriam and Aaron for their slander, emphasizing the uniqueness of Moses' relationship to G-d and the necessity of not judging another until one stands in his/her place. In the final analysis, however, it was Moses' ability to communicate an eternal Torah for all generations which caused him to lose the ultimate leadership of his particular generation and to be buried outside of the Promised Land. © 2006 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI LEVI COOPER

Preservation and Innovation

The tension between guarding sanctified traditions and innovating along uncharted routes is part of the fabric of contemporary Judaic discourse.

Each avenue is concurrently attractive and hazardous. The preservation of time-honored traditions carries the danger of a fossilized world-view. Yet as we open the doors to change we run the risk of forsaking the path of our ancestors. This tension may be at the root of one of the most famous rabbinic compromises (B. Berachot 27b-28a).

Rabban Gamliel (Eretz Yisrael, 1st-2nd centuries), the head of rabbinic Judaism in his day, conducted the academy with a strict elitism, allowing only the finest students to participate in the beit midrash (study hall) conversation. To enforce this restriction, a guard was posted at the doorway who prevented the entry of students whose outward behavior did not reflect their inner self.

Rabbinic literature records three incidents where Rabban Gamliel sought to impose the authority of his office (M. Rosh Hashana 2:8-9; B. Bechorot 36a). This iron-fisted approach led to a disregard - and even trampling - of his esteemed rabbinic colleagues. Thus Rabban Gamliel's repeated mistreatment of the respected Rabbi Yehoshua irked those present, who resolved to depose their authoritarian leader.

Alas, identifying an appropriate replacement was no simple task. Rabbi Yehoshua was immediately ruled out since appointing Rabban Gamliel's adversary would further hurt the ousted leader. Rabbi Akiva was the obvious choice to head the academy, but his candidacy was rejected in light of the concern that he would be unable to invoke ancestral merit should the unseated Rabban Gamliel - a descendant of the Davidic line - call upon divine intervention.

Finally it was decided to appoint the wise Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya, 10th in line from Ezra the Scribe and hence of priestly descent, and a sufficiently wealthy scholar to be able to travel to Rome on official business.

Presented with this opportunity, Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya tarried, returning home for deliberation before make a decision. His wife was not in favor of taking the position, ominously warning: "They will appoint you today and cast you out tomorrow!"

In response to his wife's counsel, Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya countered: "Better to use precious glassware today, though it will shatter tomorrow."

The only remaining obstacle to accepting the appointment was the scholar's youth. Divine intervention removed this barrier, as a miracle occurred and the beard of 18-year-old Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya turned white, giving him the appearance of a venerable 70-year-old sage.

Taking office, Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya unassumingly changed some beit midrash procedures. The doorman was removed and entry granted to all who wished to plumb the depths of the tradition. Everyone participated in the discussions: from great scholars to weavers from near the Dung Gate in Jerusalem (M. Eduyot 1:3), and even the overthrown Rabban Gamliel. Hundreds of benches were brought in to accommodate the increased enrollment.

This inclusive atmosphere extended to halachic decisions of that day, as Yehuda the Ammonite was permitted to marry within the community. Despite his Ammonite origins, it was determined that contemporary Ammon did not parallel biblical Ammon, and hence the scriptural prohibition against accepting Ammonite converts did not apply. The creative ambiance left its mark, and that very day was celebrated as the beginning of the mishnaic enterprise, as ancient traditions were recounted and recorded.

Seeing the excitement of the beit midrash under its new management, Rabban Gamliel began to question his own exclusionary style of leadership. In a dream, the deposed leader was assured - perhaps merely to comfort him - that he had not erred.

In a heroic act of regret, Rabban Gamliel chose to approach his adversary, Rabbi Yehoshua, in a bid for reconciliation. Initially, Rabbi Yehoshua rejected the entreaties of his counterpart, acceding to the request only when Rabban Gamliel pleaded: "Forgive me for the sake of my father's house." Thus Rabban Gamliel invoked his role as the vestige of the Davidic line - one of three treasures salvaged from besieged Jerusalem on the eve of the great city's destruction (B. Gittin 56a-b). As such, Rabban Gamliel perceived his task as bearer of the sacred heritage.

A new predicament arose: Who should now head the academy? The regal Rabban Gamliel remained the most fitting leader, certainly following his

conciliation with Rabbi Yehoshua. But removing Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya without due cause would hardly be fair, as it would constitute a decrease in holiness for the scholar, a vector foreign to the tradition.

At the root of this quandary there may have been a greater issue that transcended the individual scholars. Perhaps the real dilemma focused on the ideal leadership style and the ultimate aspirations of the beit midrash: Should we seek to preserve the tradition in its purest form, even at the cost of excluding certain voices from the discussion? Or should the doors to the beit midrash be thrown wide open with no opinion silenced, thus running the risk of adulteration for the possibility of innovation?

An even-sharing arrangement was dismissed because of the need for an undisputed leader who would set the tone and convey direction and purpose. Furthermore, it is likely that the sages felt that preservation and innovation need not be granted equal time. Once a modification has been made, the safeguarded structure is irrevocably penetrated. True, our heritage should accommodate changes in our environs, yet such transformations need to be weighed carefully to prevent corruption or even tarnishing of our hallowed and hoary traditions.

In this light, the solution is fascinating: Rabban Gamliel would serve as the head of the institution for three weeks out of every month, while the remaining week would fall under the purview of Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya.

The balance between the worthy endeavors of safeguarding the sacred conventions and allowing room for altering the established order is precarious. We aspire to an unpetrified law, which is not so malleable that it has no backbone; we seek to guard our heritage from alien bodies, though we desire a tradition that is pliable enough to allow for change. To this day we continue to grapple with the challenge of identifying the illusive equilibrium between preservation and innovation. © 2006 Rabbi L Cooper. Rabbi Levi Cooper is Director of Advanced Programs at Pardes. His column appears weekly in the Jerusalem Post "Upfront" Magazine. Each column analyses a passage from the first tractate, of the Talmud, Brachot, citing classic commentators and adding an innovative perspective to these timeless texts.

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

The beginning of the passage of the trumpets (Bamidbar 10:1-10) implies that they have two functions: "And they will be for you (1) to call the community and (2) to lead the journey of the camps" [10:2]. The Torah then gives more detail about the two roles and shows how to differentiate between them. In calling the community, one trumpet is used to blow a "tekiyah" to bring the entire nation to the entrance of the

Tent of Meeting, and two trumpets are blown to call only the leaders of the tribes. When a journey is to start, on the other hand, a "teruah" is blown. When the first blast is blown, the first camp starts to move, and so on for each individual camp. The Torah also emphasizes the need to differentiate between the two roles of the trumpets. "When the community is to be gathered, you shall blow a tekiya and not a teruah" [10:7]. The Torah then notes that it is important that the sons of Aharon, the priests, will blow the trumpets. At first glance, this should be the end of the passage.

However, as we know, the passage does not end there, rather it lists two more uses of the trumpets. (1) "When you start a war in your land against an oppressor who oppresses you, you shall blow a teruah on the trumpets, and you will be remembered before your G-d, and you will be saved from your enemies" [10:9]. (2) "And on the day of your joy and your holidays and the beginning of the months, you shall blow a tekiya on the trumpets over your Olah and Shelamim sacrifices, and they will be a memory before your G-d" [10:10]. How can these two tasks be reconciled with the general introduction of the passage, "And they will be for you to call the community and to lead the journey of the camps"?

The answer to this question is that these verses do not describe new roles for the trumpets. The fact that the trumpets are blown at a time of war is not new, since moving out for war can be viewed as a particular case of a "journey of the camps." In the same way, the use of the trumpets when the community gathers on holidays is a specific case of "calling the community together." This can be clearly seen from the details. When the warriors leave for war, a teruah is blown, as it is for any journey of a camp, and on holidays a tekiya is blown, just as when the community is to be gathered.

Thus, there is no novelty in the use of the trumpets for these two specific events, but what is new is the significance of the use. The basic use of the trumpets, for calling the community and for starting a journey, is aimed at the people. While it is true that the trumpets are made in the same way as the holy instruments of the Temple ("hammered out" [10:2]) and that the priests blow them, which shows that they are in essence holy instruments, the main objective of their use is as a signal to the nation. In the last two verses it becomes clear that the trumpets have an additional meaning, in that in days of distress on one hand or of joy on the other hand they serve a purpose of crying out or praying to G-d, because they remind the Almighty of Bnei Yisrael.

With this as a starting point, we find that a blast of trumpets is used in the rest of the Tanach for both purposes. They are often the signal for the people to gather together, such as with Ehud Ben Geira (Shoftim 3:27), Gidon (6:34), or Shaul (Shmuel I 13:3). At other

times, the blowing of a tekiya or a teruah serves as a signal for the heavens, even when the nation is already gathered in one place, as in the capture of Jericho. "Blow the trumpets, for G-d has given the city to you" [Yehoshua 6:16].

Aharon as the Commander of the Flag Bearers

by Rabbi Rachamim Sar-Shalom, "Devir Aviah" Torah Center, Pisgat Zeev

In the beginning of the Torah portion, Rashi writes: "Why is the passage of the lighting of the Menorah close to the passage of the contributions of the tribal leaders? When Aharon saw the contributions of the leaders, he was upset that he did not join them in the dedication, neither he himself nor his tribe. So the Almighty told him, I swear that your honor is greater than theirs, for you prepare and light the lamps of the Menorah." [Bamidbar 8:2]. The Ramban adds: "It is not clear to me why G-d consoled him with the act of lighting the lamps and not with the act of offering incense every morning and every night... and with the sacrifices and daily Mincha, and with the service on Yom Kippur... when he enters the holiest site as G-d's holy representative in order to serve G-d and bless in His name, and in that his tribe was the one chosen to serve G-d..." We can add another question. This was not the first time that Aharon was commanded to light the lamps—the specific command in this week's portion is that when Aharon lights the lamps he should point them towards the center of the Menorah. What is so special about this specific command that justifies the Almighty's statement that "your honor is greater than theirs"?

We may also ask about the verse, "And Aharon did this" [8:3]. Rashi notes, "Aharon is praised for not making any changes." Why is this great praise? Why should we have expected Aharon to make any changes in the command?

The answer to these questions might be based on the well known view of the Menorah as a symbol for the Torah, as is written, "A mitzva is a lamp and Torah is light" [Mishlei 6:23]. Rashi explains that Aharon was commanded that "the seven lamps should be lit towards the face of the Menorah" [Bamidbar 8:2] so that people would not be fooled into thinking that the Almighty "needs the light." Thus, this command shows that the Menorah is not meant to provide light but is rather a symbol of the Torah. Thus, Aharon was told to be a standard bearer for the Torah, as is written, "the lips of a Kohen will guard over knowledge, and Torah will be in demand from his mouth" [Malachi 2:7]. And the role of the Kohen in lighting the lamps is a symbol of this relationship.

This explains why the Torah emphasizes Aharon's praise, in that he accepted the role of the standard bearer for Torah, as is written in Pirkei Avot: "You shall be a student of Aharon, who loves peace...

and brings people closer to the Torah." [Avot 1:12]. It is also important to understand what is written in the Midrash, that "sacrifices will not exist during the time of the destruction, but this is not true of the lamps." Isn't it true that the lighting of the Menorah was also stopped during the exile? Rather, the comment must be referring to Torah, which continues to exist even after the destruction. And this explains G-d's words, "your honor will be greater than theirs." The way that Aharon lights the lamps, "the seven lamps should be lit towards the face of the Menorah," symbolizes the rise of the light of Torah.

In essence, the Torah belongs not only to Aharon but rather to each and every one of us, as has been written by the Rambam, "It is not only the tribe of Levi but rather every individual in the world who volunteers and understands that he should serve G-d and try to know Him... such a person is sanctified to the highest degree, and G-d will be his heritage forever and ever" [Hilchot Shemitta V'Yovel 13:12].

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

TIn this week's parsha, G-d tells Moshe (Moses) that a person (ish) who is impure because of contact with a dead body (tameh lanefesh) or too far away from Jerusalem (derekh rekhoka) is given a second chance to eat the paschal lamb. (Numbers 9:10-11)

The phrase tameh lanefesh speaks about a spiritual deficiency—when one has contact with a dead body, emotional and religious turbulence sets in.

The phrase vederekh rehoka, speaks of a physical impediment—one who is simply too far away to partake of the paschal lamb on time.

Indeed, throughout Jewish history we have faced both spiritual and physical challenges. What is most interesting is that in the Torah the spiritual challenge is mentioned first. This is because it is often the case that the Jewish community is more threatened spiritually than physically.

This is what is occurring today. Anti-semitism is not our key challenge. The spiraling intermarriage rate among American Jews proves this point. Throughout Jewish history whenever anti-semitism prevailed non-Jews did not marry Jews. In America we are so free that non-Jews are marrying us in droves. The late Prof. Eliezer Berkovits was correct when he said that from a sociological perspective, a Jew is one whose grandchildren are Jewish. The painful reality is that large numbers of the grandchildren of today's American Jews will not be Jewish.

And in Israel, thank G-d, a large measure of security has been achieved. It is the Jewish soul, rather than the Jewish body that is most at risk.

Most interesting is that even the phrase vederekh rehoka, which on the surface is translated as

a physical stumbling block, can be understood as a spiritual crisis. On top of the last letter of rehoka (the heh), is a dot. Many commentators understand this mark to denote that, in order to understand this phrase, the heh should be ignored. As a consequence, the term rahok, which is masculine, cannot refer to derekh which is feminine. It rather refers to the word ish, found earlier in the sentence. (Jerusalem Talmud Psachim 9:2) The phrase therefore may refer to Jews who are physically close to Jerusalem yet spiritually far, far away.

The message is clear. What is needed is a refocusing of our priorities from physical to spiritual salvation. The Torah teaches that the Jewish community must continue to confront anti-Semitism everywhere. But while combating anti-Semitism is an important objective in and of itself, the effort must be part of a far larger goal—the stirring and reawakening of Jewish consciousness throughout the world. © 1999 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd when the Ark traveled Moshe said, 'Stand, Hashem' (Bamidbar 10:34). But what did Moshe mean when he asked G-d to "stand"? Did he mean "stand" as in "arise," the way we would ask someone to change from being in a sitting position to a standing one? Or, did he mean "stand" as in "stop," the way we would ask someone who was getting too far ahead to stay where they were?

Rashi tells us that it was the latter, as the Ark traveled 3 days ahead of the nation (10:33), and Moshe was asking G-d to "stop" and wait for them to catch up. However, Rashi had also told us earlier (9:17) that the Anan (cloud that contained G-d's presence) didn't start to travel until Moshe said "stand, Hashem," i.e. get up and go. How can Moshe's words be the signal for G-d to start traveling and *at the same time* be a request that G-d, who had already traveled a 3-day journey, refrain from traveling further? Either G-d had already started to travel or He was waiting for Moshe to "say the magic words" before starting, but not both. Which one was it?

Rashi also tells us (10:34) that, based on there being 7 mentions of the Anan during the nation's travels, there were 7 Ananim that traveled with the nation; four surrounding them on all four sides, one above them, one below them, and one that traveled before them that smoothed the way for them and killed deadly creatures before they encountered them. But what about the most important Anan, the one that was over the Mishkan that had G-d's Shechinah (divine presence)? Why didn't Rashi mention it either as one of the 7 Ananim, or say that there were really 8?

Although Rashi doesn't list which 7 verses mention the Anan, the Sifray (Behaalosecha 83), upon which Rashi is based, does. One of these (Shemos 40:38) says "for the Anan of Hashem was on the Mishkan," indicating that even though the Anan over the Mishkan wasn't one of the 7 listed, it was the same Anan as one of them. The question is which one.

There are numerous Midrashim that list the Ananim, including the Beraisa d'Meleches haMishkan (BdMhM). This Beraisa (14:1) is mirrored in the Yalkut Shimoni (427), and seems to differ on the list of Ananim with the Sifray. "And this (the Anan that, upon camping, returned to the Mishkan) was one of the Ananay Kavod (clouds of glory) that served Israel in the desert for 40 years: one to their right and one to their left and one before them and one after them and one above them and the Anan of the Shechinah that was among them and the Anan pillar ("Amud heAnan") that traveled before them lowering before them what was high and raising before them what was low and killing snakes and scorpions and burning thorns and leading them on the straight path and the Anan rested in the Tent (i.e. Mishkan)."

Among the differences between this list and the one Rashi quotes are (1) the number of Ananim is not given (while Rashi says there were 7); (2) the Anan that was under them is not mentioned; and (3) the Anan over the Mishkan is mentioned (numerous times). Since Rashi relies extensively on the BdMhM in his explanation of the process of the travels (Bamidbar 2:9, 9:18 and 10:2), it is a bit curious that Rashi uses the Sifray here instead.

Aside from the differences between the lists, the wording at the end of the BdMhM seems a bit awkward as well. Before the first 5 Ananim it uses the word "and one," but not before mentioning the last two (the Anan of the Shechinah and the Anan pillar that cleared the way before them). Then, after mentioning the Anan pillar, it mentions the Anan resting in the Mishkan a second time, for no apparent reason. I would like to suggest that the BdMhM only mentions 6 of the 7 Ananim because it is discussing their arrangement when they were *not* traveling, and the purpose of the 7th Anan, the one that was below them, was to serve as a sort of "moving sidewalk" and to make it easier on their feet (see Sifray Zuta, Behaalosecha 33). Rashi, on the other hand, lists all 7 Ananim, as he is discussing their formation when they traveled.

Putting a "period" after the 6 mentioned by the BdMhM makes the context as follows: The Anan that returned to the Mishkan was one of the Ananim that served Israel for all 40 years (even when camped); one to their right, one to their left, one before them, one after them, one above them, and the previously mentioned Anan of the Shechinah. The Beraisa then tells us more about the Anan of the Shechinah: It

traveled before them to prepare the way when they traveled, and was in the Mishkan when they camped.

We can not only understand why Rashi used the Sifray's version instead (as the two really don't argue and the Sifray mentions all 7), but we also have now identified which Anan of the 7 Rashi mentioned was the Anan that was over the Mishkan: the one that was in front preparing the way.

There are additional indications that the Anan that traveled before them to prepare the way when they traveled was the one that rested on the Mishkan when they camped. For one thing, if they weren't traveling, what purpose would the Anan in front serve? Another is that both are referred to as the "Amud heAnan" (Shemos 13:22 and 14:19, Bamidbar 14:14, Devarim 31:15). Also, while the Anan that traveled before them is often described as preparing the way by smoothing the landscape and killing dangerous creatures, the same is said of the Ark that was 3 days in front (see Berachos 54b, Bamidbar Rabbah 1:2, Devarim Rabbah 7:9 and Tosefta Sotah 4:1), indicating that it was G-d's presence in the Anan accompanying the Ark that performed these miraculous preparations. The Mechilta (Hakdamas Beshalach) says explicitly that the Shechinah was with this Anan, and the Sifray Zuta (Behaalosecha 33) calls it the "Anan Shechinah." Unless the Shechinah "jumped" from Anan to Anan, it was the Anan that was in the Mishkan that traveled 3 days in front of them before returning to the Mishkan.

But the "Amud heAnan" is also described as being over Yehudah when they traveled (BdMhM 13:6 and 14:1, quoted by Rashi on Bamidbar 9:18). How could it be with the Ark in front *and* over Yehudah? I would like to further suggest that when the nation was fulfilling G-d's will, the Anan that contained the Shechinah actually covered the entire nation. When camped, it was based in the Mishkan, rose over the Mishkan, and spread over the entire 12 mil of the camp (similar to a tree, with its trunk by the Mishkan and its leaves spread out over a much wider area). The Sifray Zuta (and other Midrashim) says that the "Amud heAnan" followed an individual that left the camp, "extending and protecting him where he was." So not only did the "Amud heAnan" cover the entire nation, it even stretched at certain spots to remain over every single member of the nation.

And this wasn't the only "stretching" or "extending" that this Anan did. The Tanchuma (Bamidbar 12, see also Yalkut Shimoni 686) says that when it was time to travel, "a [pointer] beam went out from the Anan so that they would know which direction they should go." This was the "beam" that was over Yehudah, i.e. extending from Yehudah in the direction they should travel. At the front end of this "beam" was the Ark, preparing the way.

We can now try to recreate the scene when the nation was camped, started to travel, and then

recamped. The Anan of the Shechinah was based in and over the Mishkan, but was spread out over the entire nation. When it was time to travel, the Anan extended out like a beam, accompanied by the Ark. Even though it had extended in front for a distance of a 3-day journey, it was still covering the nation, and was still attached to the Mishkan. Moshe saw that G-d wanted the nation to travel, and was already way out in front, but was still in the Mishkan. He therefore said "kumah Hashem," "stand, Hashem," referring to both ends of the Anan at the same time. The part in front should "stop" and wait for them, while the part by the Mishkan should "get up" so that they could take the Mishkan apart for the trip.

Therefore, Rashi explains both of Moshe's intentions. He was asking G-d not to travel any further so that they could catch up, while, at the same time, asking G-d to leave the Mishkan so that they could start the journey. © 2006 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayan

We read in this week's parashah that Moshe was commanded to make trumpets which were to be blown on various occasions. These included: holidays, when it was time to assemble, and when the nation went out to war.

When the Torah speaks of blowing the trumpets in war time, the Torah mentions only the sound called *teruah*, i.e., the broken sound that represents crying. However, the gemara (Rosh Hashanah 34a) teaches that any time a *teruah* is blown, it must be preceded and followed by a *tekiah*, a long sound. R' Mordechai Rogov z"l (1900-1969; rosh yeshiva in Chicago) explains:

Teruah is the sound of a groan and a wail, while *tekiah* is the sound of triumph and happiness. This is the power of the Jewish people—our *teruot* are always accompanied by *tekiot*. Even when the sounds of wailing and groaning are heard in the camp of Yisrael, there is never total despair. At the same time, the *tekiot* are heard—the sounds of hope and trust.

This is what the Torah is teaching us. When the oppressors come to our gates, we should sound the *teruot* together with *tekiot*. It is in this merit that we will be delivered from our enemies [as verse 10:9 suggests]. (Ateret Mordechai) © 2001 Rabbi S. Katz & Project Genesis

