

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Man and Humbleman

In this week's Parshas B'halosecha, the Torah tells the story of Miriam speaking what is termed as Lashon HoRah (gossip) about her brother Moshe. Moshe was ordained to receive Hashem's direct word at any given moment. Moshe correlated the command given to the Children of Israel before the Divine revelation at Sinai to separate from woman, and applied it to his situation. Moshe, as the man of G-d, readied himself to be in a constant state of preparedness for the Divine Word. Thus, once he was ordained by Hashem to be the spontaneous recipient of the Divine word, he separated from his wife as an extra measure of sanctity.

But Miriam felt that this self-initiated measure of sanctity was uncalled for, thus. "And Miriam and Aharon spoke against Moshe because of the Kushite woman whom he had married; for he had married a Kushite woman. And they said, 'Has G-d indeed spoken only by (through) Moshe? Has he not spoken also by us?' And G-d heard it. And the man Moshe was very humble, more than any other men upon the face of the earth" (Bamidbar 12:1-3).

My focus is not on the ideological or theological argument about Moshe's separation. It is on the Torah's testimony about Moshe's humility. "And the man Moshe was very humble, more than any other men upon the face of the earth." From the creator of all men that indeed is a powerful statement, and perhaps a goal that we should all strive for. But the expression seems to contain an extra word. "And the man Moshe..." Of course it was the man Moshe! We know Moshe was a man. Why not just say, "and Moshe was very humble..."

There is a wonderful, yet apocryphal little story about Rav Yechezkel Abramsky, who served as the Senior Dayan (Chief Judge) of the London Beis Din from 1934, until he retired to Jerusalem in 1951. The story goes that Rabbi Abramsky was called on Rav Abramsky to be a character witness in secular court in a

case concerning a member of London's Jewish community. Before testifying the presiding magistrate asked the Rabbi some questions regarding his own qualifications. According to the legend, the questions went something like this: "Is it true that you have mastered the Talmud?" Rabbi Abramsky affirmed.

"What other Jewish tomes are you familiar with?" asked the judge. Rabbi Abramsky went on to list about a score of works from the Jerusalem Talmud, Midrash to the entire Shulchan Aruch and its commentaries. The judge then asked, "How proficient are you in these areas?"

"I know them by heart," replied the rabbi.

The judge was taken aback. "Rabbi," he asked, "in your religion and in your position is there no room for humility?"

"Of course there is, your honor," rejoined the rabbi softly, "but I am under oath." (Though I heard this story on a tape from a venerable speaker, I assume that it is an apocryphal for the following reason: While perusing for parables and other pertinent stories, I came across a book entitled "Chicken Soup for the Soul" which included a similar story by David Casstevens of the Dallas Morning News about Frank Szymanski, a Notre Dame center in the 1940s, who had been called as a witness in a civil suit at South Bend.)

There is an adage said in the name of the founder of the mussar movement, Rabbi Yisrael Salanter: A Rabbi who the community does not want to dismiss is not a Rabbi; but a Rabbi who the community succeeds in dismissing is not a man!

Moshe indeed was the humblest one on the face of the earth, but he was also someone that Hashem referred to as the man, Moshe Moshe is one who battled angels in order to receive Torah (Talmud Shabbos 88b). Moshe is the one who anthropomorphically seized G-d's cloak when persuading Him not to destroy his nation after the sin of the Golden Calf (Talmud Berachos 32). Moshe is the man who stood up against a rebellion of Korach and his cohorts. Moshe is the man who defied Hashem's request to destroy the nation after the sin of the spies and refused to allow it be built anew from his own progeny. Yet Moshe was still the humblest on the face of the earth. Because you can be the humblest person, yet still be a man. © 2010 Rabbi M. Kamenezky and torah.org

This issue of Toras Aish is dedicated by
Mr. & Mrs. Itzy Weisberg

לעלוי נשמת

Mrs. Ida Weisberg

חיה פייגה בת ר' יעקב יוסף ז"ל

on her 16th yartzeit

נפטרה י"ז סיון תשנ"ד

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RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The troubles, disappointments and disasters that visit the Jewish people on their trek through the Sinai desert begin in this week's parsha. Moshe announces that "we are traveling now to our ultimate destination-the Land of Israel."

But deep down in their hearts the people are not really that anxious to go there. They have in their minds and hearts two options, either to remain in the desert and live a life of supernatural miracles and there become the dor deah-the generation of exclusive intellect and Torah knowledge, or to return somehow to Egypt with all that that radical move would entail, physically and spiritually.

The Torah will soon detail for us that neither of these two options are satisfactory either. They will complain about the manna that falls from heaven daily and the seeming lack of variety in their meals. They don't like the water supply which is never guaranteed to them.

They remember the good food that they supposedly had in Egypt but according to Midrash, only a small minority actually wishes to return to Egypt on a permanent basis. They will press forward with Moshe to reach the promised Land of Israel, but they will do so reluctantly and halfheartedly.

And, this will lead inexorably to further rebellion, tragedy and the death of an entire generation-notwithstanding its being a dor deah-in the desert of Sinai. This makes this week's parsha a very sad and depressing one, for we already know the end of the story. We can already see that this generation has doomed itself to desolation and destruction.

Coming to the Land of Israel and its Jewish state, whether as a tourist and most certainly when someone immigrates, requires commitment and enthusiasm. There are many who came to Israel over the past one hundred years by default, but the country has truly been served and built by those who came with a sense of mission, purpose, happiness and expectation.

Moshe's clarion call, "that we are traveling to the place" of our destiny, echoes throughout the Jewish ages. Not all such calls are heard and even fewer are

followed. Nevertheless the call has resonated within the Jewish people for all of its history. It is that call that appears in today's parsha and again it is that call that Moshe proclaimed millennia ago that was and is the guiding motive for the existence of the State of Israel today.

Just as then in the desert, there are options for Jews today present in our world. The many "Egyptys" of the world beckon with all of their seeming allure but also with great underlying faults and dangers. And there are those who wish to continue to live in a desert that demands nothing from them and contemplate themselves somehow as being a dor deah.

History has always arisen and smitten these options from the Jewish future. The long trek begun by Moshe and Israel in this week's parsha continues. We hope that we are witnessing, at last, its final successful conclusion. © 2010 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

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

The words we recite when taking the Torah from the Ark are found in this week's portion. "And it came to pass, when the Ark set forward, that Moshe (Moses) said 'rise up O Lord and let Your enemies be scattered; and let them that hate You flee before You.'" (Numbers 10:35)

This sentence is unique in its importance as it is inserted between two inverted letters nun that almost look like brackets. The Talmud claims that this sentence actually constitutes a book of its own. (Shabbat 116a)

In this way, it is actually the smallest book of the Torah. What truly is the meaning of this sentence? What is the relationship between the Ark and the scattering of our enemies? And finally, what makes this sentence important enough to be recited when taking the Torah from the ark?

Ultimately the Torah is a book that reflects a system of ethics that comes from G-d. From that perspective, the Torah is at war against paganism, and practices that are contrary to G-d's ethical systems. Thus, when we take the Torah from the Ark, we declare that its very motif is to scatter those who are antagonistic to Torah to its fundamental ethical principles.

Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch offers a variation of this theme. In Nechama Leibowitz's words: "Hirsch remarked that Moshe was aware that enemies would rise up against the Torah from the moment that it was given. Its demands for justice and altruism were bound to antagonize aggressors and tyrants and stand in the way of their design. The Torahs call to holiness would not only arouse hatred, but also active persecution."

Just sixty five years after the Shoah, this concept especially resonates. Some have actually suggested that Hitler's hatred of the Jews was precipitated by his understanding that Judaism stood firmly against his positions. Thus, when taking out the Torah we say that the enemy, who would oppose the Torah, should be defeated.

Another thought comes to mind. The test of one's ethical behavior is how we act in the most difficult of situations. One of those situations is in war itself. Therefore, the juxtaposition between Torah and scattering the enemy. In other words, the Torah declares, when we go to war and are hopeful that the enemy will be dispersed, the Torah, G-d's system of ethics, must always be kept.

This concept has contemporary meaning. When Israeli soldiers are inducted into the army they make a commitment to what is called *tihur ha-neshek* - purity of arms. In other words, they declare that even in the most difficult situations when they must use force, they commit themselves to do so with purity, with goodness, with a sense of what is right.

To the world we must echo the words of this week's portion. To the world, we must declare *ashrei ha-am she-yeish lo tzavah musari ke-tzvah haganah le-yisrael*-blessed is the nation that has as its army - the Israel Defense Forces - which is amongst the most moral armies on the face of the earth © 2010 *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.*

CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

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

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

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

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

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

This is not a new story. We have heard it before (see for example Exodus 16). Yet on this occasion, Moses experiences what one can only call a breakdown: "He asked the Lord, 'Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth?... I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how You are going to treat me, put me to death right now-if I have found favor in your eyes-and do not let me face my own ruin.'" (Num. 11:11-15)

Moses prays for death! Nor is he the only person in Tanakh to do so. There are at least three others. There is Elijah, when after his successful confrontation with the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel, Queen Jezebel issues a warrant that he be killed: "Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, Lord,' he said. 'Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.'" (1 Kings 19:3-4)

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

And there is Jeremiah, after the people fail to heed his message and publicly humiliate him: "O Lord, You enticed me, and I was enticed; You overpowered me and prevailed. I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me... The word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long... Cursed be the day I was

born! May the day my mother bore me not be blessed! Cursed be the man who brought my father the news, made him very glad, saying, 'A child is born to you-a son!'... Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?" (Jeremiah 20:7-18)

Lehavdil elef havdalot: no comparison is intended between the religious heroes of Tanakh and political heroes of the modern world. They are different types, living in different ages, functioning in different spheres. Yet we find a similar phenomenon in one of the great figures of the twentieth century, Winston Churchill. Throughout much of his life he was prone to periods of acute depression. He called it "the black dog". He told his daughter, "I have achieved a great deal to achieve nothing in the end". He told a friend that "he prays every day for death". In 1944 he told his doctor, Lord Moran, that he kept himself from standing close to a train platform or overlooking the side of a ship because he might be tempted to commit suicide: "A second's desperation would end everything" (these quotes are taken from Anthony Storr, Churchill's Black Dog).

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

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

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

Again without seeking to equate the sacred and the secular, I end with some words spoken by Theodore Roosevelt (in a speech to students at the Sorbonne, Paris, 23 April 1910), which sum up both the challenge and the consolation of leadership in cadences of timeless eloquence: "It is not the critic who counts, Not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, Or where the doer of deeds could actually have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, Whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, Who strives valiantly, Who errs and comes short again and again-Because there is no effort without error and shortcomings-But who does actually strive to do the deed, Who knows great enthusiasm, great devotion, Who spends himself in a worthy cause, Who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement And who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly-So that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls Who know neither victory nor defeat." © 2010 Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and torah.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

This fourth book of the Bible, the book of Numbers, began in high gear, with the various tribes situated around the Sanctuary - the focal point of the encampment - with each tribe proudly displaying its banners, its unique characteristic and contribution to the nation; a census is taken, the priests are prepared to serve the Divine and the army is prepared for mobilization. From the time of the sin with the Golden Calf, the children of Israel have been on a steadily upward climb, from the message of forgiveness on the first Yom Kippur to the construction of the Sanctuary, to the Book of Holiness (Vayikra), and to a nation poised for the conquest and settlement of the Promised Land, which would have ushered in complete redemption had the process continued on schedule.

Tragically, that was not to be; in the space of this week's portion, we witness a precipitous deterioration which takes the nation from the heights of "a kingdom of priest-teachers and a sacred nation" (Ex 19:6), to the depths of "and the people began to naggingly complain" (Numbers 11:1). And this was only the beginning, what follows is the sin of the scouts, the various rebellions against Moses and the tragedy of that entire exodus generation dying in the desert.

The deleterious and disastrous descent begins with the "nagging complaints" (mit'onenim) in our portion, at first arousing a fiery anger from G-d which destroys the edge of the camp and eventually leads to an "extremely severe plague" in which the complaining, craving Israelites are buried in what Moses calls "the Graves of Craving" (Numbers 11:31-35).

What is difficult to understand is the marked difference in G-d's reaction to the complaining Israelites

here in the Book of Numbers and His reaction to their complaints in the Book of Exodus. Even then, the Israelites were not "easy customers." Just three days after experiencing the great wonders of the ten plagues culminating in the miracle of the splitting of the Reed Sea, they only find "bitter" waters to drink, "the people complained against Moses" (Ex 15:24). G-d does not punish them, instead, without comment, He provides Moses with a bark from a special tree which sweetens the waters.

And then, only 30 days after the Exodus, upon their arrival at the Sin desert, they complain bitterly because they have no food: "If only we had died by G-d's hand in Egypt... you had to bring us out to this desert, to kill the entire community by starvation!" (Ex 16:1-3). G-d immediately - and without comment - provides the manna. And finally, when they leave the Sin desert and encamp in Rephidim, they again quarrel with Moses over their lack of water, and G-d tells Moses to strike a large boulder at Horeb. This time, water would - and did - come out of the rock (Exodus 17:1-7). And although Moses names this place "Testing and Strife" ("Masa u'Merivah"), what immediately follows is the successful war against Amalek, won for the Israelites by the Divine response to Moses' hands raised in prayer to G-d.

How different is G-d's reaction to the complaints less than one year later (Numbers 1:1), when a fire consumes the edge of the camp and a plague results in mass graves. Why the change?

Rav Moshe Lichtenstein, in his illuminating study, "Moses: Envoy of G-d, Envoy of His People" (Hebrew, "Tzir V'Tzon"), suggests that the requests and complaints in Exodus were for the basic necessities of life, water and bread. Although the Israelites should have had greater faith, one can hardly fault them for desiring their existential needs.

In our Biblical portion of Beha'alotkha, however, they are not complaining about scarcity of water; they are complaining about the lack of variety in the menu! The text even introduces the subject by stating that the nation was "kvetching" (in Hebrew, the strange word "mit'onenim" rather than the visual "mitlonenim" for complaining) evilly in the ears of G-d - without even mentioning what they were complaining about (Numbers 11:1). And with this unspecified complaint, G-d's fire flares out. After this punishment, the nation cries out, "Who will give us meat to eat?" and then continues with, "We remember the fish we ate for free in Egypt, and the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic; our spirits are dried up with nothing but manna before our eyes" (ibid 11:4-6). What do they want - meat, or fish, or melons or garlic?!

G-d's response is also strange; He tells Moses to appoint 70 elders (11:16), and sends the Israelites quails to eat. They ask for meat and G-d gives them rabbis! And while they are eating the quails, they are smitten by the severe plague. Why are they

complaining, and why is G-d so angry? And if indeed He is disappointed, even upset, by their finicky desires, why give in to their cravings and why send them rabbis?

Herein lies the essential difference between the complaints in Exodus and the complaints in Numbers. In Exodus, the nation had a clear goal; they were committed to the mission of becoming a kingdom of priest-teachers and a sacred nation, and were anxiously anticipating the content of that mission, a G-d-given doctrine of compassionate righteousness and moral justice which they must impart to the world. In order to receive and fulfill their mission they had to live, and so they legitimately requested water and bread.

One year later, in Numbers, they had already received the Torah. And they were complaining, kvetching, without having specific complaints; and they were craving all sorts of desires - from meat to garlic. G-d understood that if they were still inspired by their mission, if they remained grateful for their freedom and the opportunity it would afford them to forge a committed and idealistic nation, they would not be in need of watermelons and leeks and would not be craving for something that they themselves had never tasted. The Netziv suggests that the Hebrew *mi'onenim* comes from *anna*, wither and thither, a nation that lost its compass was searching for meaning. Having achieved and received the Torah, the once sought-after object lost its glamour, its appeal, its allure. And so they substituted their mission with nonsensical cravings - no wonder G-d was disappointed and angry. Perhaps 70 elders would be able to restore their ideals! © 2010 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd two men remained in the camp; the name of the first was Eldud and the name of the second was Meidud" (Bamidbar 11:26). Rashi, based on Chazal, explains why they "remained in the camp" instead of "going out to the Tent [of Meeting]" (ibid). Moshe had chosen 72 elders, six from each of the 12 Tribes, and had devised a process for deciding which 70 of those 72 elders would make up the newly-forming Sanhedrin. Eldud and Meidud had made the cut to be part of the 72, but due to their humility, didn't go to the Mishkan to take part in the lottery that would decide who the 70 would be and which two would be left out.

Moshe's dilemma was simple; the math didn't work. G-d had told him to "gather 70 men from the elders of Israel" (11:16), and with 12 Tribes there could not be the same amount of elders from each Tribe. In order to avoid (or limit) the tension and jealousy that might arise as a result of having two Tribes contribute fewer elders, Moshe used a lottery system. He wrote the word "elder" on 70 (or, according to some, 72) slips of paper (or parchment) and added two blank slips, putting all of the slips into a box. Each perspective elder

took a slip out of the box, and "whomever took [a slip that said] "elder" became sanctified (as a member of the Sanhedrin), and whomever took [a slip that was] blank, [Moshe] said to him, 'G-d does not want you' (Rashi).

If two perspective elders took blank slips (implied by Rashi, and explicit in the Yerushalmi, Sanhedrin 1:4), and Eldud and Meidud didn't take any slips, then there were only 68 finalists who got a slip that said "elder" on it. Yet, Moshe gathered 70 elders and had them stand around the Mishkan (11:24), and they received G-d's divine spirit through Moshe (11:25). Who were the other two elders? How could there be 70 if only 68 qualified? Did the Sanhedrin end up with two members whom G-d really didn't want?

The Mizrachi and the Or Hachayim suggest that according to one opinion in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 17a) Eldud and Meidud were actually the two that didn't qualify. Nevertheless, because they stayed back on their own, they were rewarded with an even higher level of prophecy than the 70 elders. If so, then the other 70 of the original 72 were the ones "chosen by G-d" to become members of the Sanhedrin. However, even they acknowledge that according to the other opinion in the Talmud, Eldud and Meidud were originally supposed to be in the Sanhedrin; if they backed out, we are still left with two "unwanted" members. The Bechor Shor understands that (first) opinion to be saying that Eldud and Meidud were supposed to be part of the Sanhedrin, but explains the second opinion to be that, in order to avoid anyone being embarrassed, they backed out before the lottery even took place. If there never was a lottery, then none of the 72 "finalists" were ever told that they were "unwanted." However, this is inconsistent with how most understand that opinion, and the issue of having two "unwanted" members of Sanhedrin must still be addressed according to the first opinion. Besides, according to Rashi, both opinions in the Talmud have Eldud and Meidud as qualifying for the Sanhedrin; the only difference between them is whether they stayed back out of humility or out of fear of being embarrassed (see Maharsha).

The Yalkut Shimoni (736), quoting a "lost" Midrash (known as "Midrash Esfa" because it is discussing the verse where Moshe is told to "gather" the elders), provides the names of the 70 elders. Actually, there are two versions quoted, with many names overlapping and others unique to each version. In the second version, Eldud and Meidud are listed as being part of the new Sanhedrin. Rather than having to explain how two that were "unwanted" became part of the Sanhedrin, the question becomes how there were 70 "around the Tent" (11:24) if two of the 70 "remained in the camp." Numerous reasons are given as to why there were 70 elders (not more or less, see Baal Haturim and Ramban); one reason given (Midrash Hagadol) is based on the perimeter of the Mishkan. The north and south sides of the Mishkan each had 20

beams, and each beam was a cubit and a half wide, so each of those sides had a length of 30 cubits. The western side had eight beams, for a length of 12 cubits, but two of those cubits covered the sides of the western-most beams of the north and south walls, leaving only 10 cubits (internally) on the western side, for a total of 70 cubits (the eastern side didn't have any beams, just pillars to support the curtain of the doorway). The elders took their respective positions "around the Tent," each one standing in the cubit they correlated to, but since they were on the outside, they really needed to cover 72 cubits (12, not 10, on the western wall). Midrash Esfa (quoted in Yalkut 737) says that the "Tent [of Meeting]" does not refer to the Mishkan, but to Moshe's tent, where he still spoke to G-d, which was outside of the nation's encampment and was also called "the Tent of Meeting" (see Shemos 33:7). [Since we are told explicitly (Shemos 25:22 and Bamidbar 7:89) that G-d spoke to Moshe from the Mishkan, I am assuming that when G-d initiated the conversation, it was from the Mishkan, but when Moshe initiated it, it was in this Tent.] This Tent had the same dimensions as the Mishkan, but without having to compensate for the thickness of any beams, the external perimeter would match the internal one. If Eldud and Meidud "remained in the camp," the other 70 perspective elders were the ones "outside the camp" standing in their respective cubits around Moshe's "Tent of Meeting." If you take a close look at the verse (11:24), it does not say that "the" 70 elders stood around the Tent, but that "70 men, from the elders of the nation" did. The final determination hadn't been made yet, so all 70 that showed up took their places "around the Tent." (Had Eldud and Meidud shown up, perhaps they would have combined with the other 72 to represent the 72 cubits of the Mishkan's external perimeter; even without the thickness of the beams, the space taken up by the bodies of the elders could necessitate 12 on the western side.) The next verse, however (11:25), says that the divine spirit was given to "seven men, the elders," i.e. the 70 who actually made up the new Sanhedrin. True, only 68 of those "around the Tent" were given that divine spirit; the other two, Eldud and Meidud, the two that had "remained in the camp," had the divine spirit rest upon them where they were. In the end, though, according to this Midrash, only the 70 "wanted" elders became part of the Sanhedrin.

This only works if Eldud and Meidud were, in fact, part of the Sanhedrin. But they are only included in the second list of names in the Midrash, not the first list (or a third list, in a manuscript in the Vatican quoted as also being part of Midrash Esfa by the Vilna Gaon's son, R' Avraham, in "Rav Pe'alim," pgs. 149-150). Rashi himself (and the opinion in the Talmud he is quoting) would seem to not include Eldud and Meidud in the Sanhedrin, as Yehoshua's request that Moshe "destroy them" (11:28) is understood as "give them the responsibilities of public service." Moshe's response

that it would be preferable if the whole nation were prophets seems to indicate that he did not inhibit their prophecy by appointing them to the Sanhedrin, i.e. give them public responsibilities. If Eldud and Meidud should have been on the Sanhedrin but declined, and the two elders that replaced them took a slip without the word "elder" out of the box, necessitating Moshe telling them that G-d didn't want them, how could two members of Sanhedrin be those that were "unwanted by G-d?"

There is much discussion (e.g. Iyuan Yaakov on Sanhedrin 17a) about why Moshe used 72 slips, rather than 12 (since each Tribe would have five "elders," and the only question was which would have five and which would have six). The very fact that all 72 were put into the same box indicates that all 72 were worthy of being members of the Sanhedrin (not that the first 60 were more worthy than the 12 of whom 10 would make it). We have already discussed how the elders corresponded to the number of cubits of the Mishkan's perimeter; the 72 pre-qualified elders could be said to correspond to the Mishkan's outside perimeter. In Meseches Sofrim (2:6), when it lists the amount of lines each "page" in a Torah scroll can have, one of the possibilities is 72, "corresponding to the 72 elders." Not 70, but 72. We are therefore "forced" to say that when Moshe told them (or would have told them) that they were "unwanted by G-d," it was in the context of "you've already been chosen as one of the 72, and are worthy of being on the Sanhedrin; however, in relation to the other 70 finalists, they are more worthy, and therefore more wanted by G-d."

Many lessons about leadership can be learned from the appointment of the new Sanhedrin. Included is the necessity of risking being turned down in order to qualify for leadership, as well as taking on the role (when it is given) even when not the first choice. © 2010 Rabbi D. Kramer

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

Based on the Yismach Moshe edition of the Commentary by Or Hachaim as summarized by Boaz Ofan

“Let the seven lamps cast their light towards the face of the Menorah” [Bamidbar 8:2]. The rabbis asked why the Menorah was lit in the Tabernacle: "Does He need the light? For forty years when Yisrael journeyed in the desert, they were led by His light!" [Shabbat 22b].

Tosafot ask the following: Why is the pillar of fire that accompanied Bnei Yisrael at night used to show that the light of the Menorah was superfluous?

The Talmud could have asked a much better question: The Almighty lights up the entire world with the sun, why does He need the Menorah!

The answer of the Tosafot is that the light of the sun indeed illuminates the entire world, but the rays of

the sun did not reach into the Tabernacle, since it was covered by skins. On the other hand, the light of the pillar of fire at night did penetrate through opaque materials (as is noted in the Midrash-a man could look at a barrel and see what was inside it!). This means that the area inside the Tabernacle was lit up by the column of fire, and therefore the Menorah was indeed not needed at night.

Or Hachaim does not understand the question at all. In his opinion the light of the Menorah referred to was not its physical manifestation but rather the revelation of the Shechina. Therefore, in spite of the great revelation involved, the creation of the sun is a natural phenomenon and it is therefore a relatively minor revelation as far as the Shechina is concerned. The column of fire, on the other hand, was a unique miracle performed exclusively for Bnei Yisrael, and it was therefore so important that there would seem to be no need for the lights of the Menorah. In spite of this, Bnei Yisrael were commanded to light the Menorah because "it is testimony to the creatures of the world that the Shechina dwells within Yisrael"-within the people themselves, not just providing physical light like the pillar of fire.

RABBI DOVID SIEGEL

Haftorah

This week's haftorah gives us a profound insight into the spiritual direction of our present exile and final redemption. The haftorah begins with the prophet Zecharya experiencing a vision wherein the ordained High Priest, Yehoshua, was brought to a critical trial regarding his pending esteemed position. Zecharya says, "And I was shown the High Priest Yehoshua standing before Hashem's prosecuting angel." (3:1) The reason for this prosecution is stated shortly thereafter in the following words, "And Yehoshua was clothed with soiled garments." (3:3) Our Chazal explain that these garments refer to the wives of Yehoshua's descendants. Although Yehoshua was personally a very pious individual some of his children were adversely affected by the foreign environment of Babylonia. They strayed from their rich heritage of priesthood and married women prohibited to them due to their lofty ritual status. Because of this offense to the priesthood, Yehoshua's personal status of the High Priest was under severe scrutiny.

Suddenly, an angel of Hashem interceded on behalf of Yehoshua and defeated the prosecuting angel with the following statement of defense. "Is Yehoshua not an ember rescued from the fire!?" (3:2) This response of defense was quite favorable in the eyes of Hashem and Yehoshua was immediately restored to his lofty position. The angel responded and said, "Remove the soiled garments from upon Yehoshua... See that I have removed his sin from him... Dress him with new garments." The prophet continues, "And they placed the

pure priestly turban on his head." (3:4) Rashi (adloc.) explains that Yehoshua was granted the opportunity of rectifying his children's behavior and he successfully influenced them to divorce their wives and marry more appropriate ones. Once Yehoshua's garments-referring to his children's inappropriate spouses-were cleansed Hashem clothed Yehoshua with the priestly garb and restored him to the position of Kohain Gadol.

What was the angel's powerful defense that produced such immediate favorable results? After his sons' disgrace to the priesthood, what outstanding merit could Yehoshua have possessed that secured his lofty position? The Radak explains that the angel argued that Yehoshua was "an ember rescued from fire." Radak understands this to mean that Yehoshua had been previously thrown into a fiery furnace. He sacrificed his life for the sake of Hashem and was miraculously spared from the fire. Through this heroic act, Yehoshua demonstrated total submission for the sake of Heaven offering his life for Hashem's glory. Such individuals deserve to prominently serve Hashem and His people. Such devotion and commitment must be inculcated into the blood stream of the Jewish people. Although Yehoshua's children veered from the straight path there remained much hope for them.

The shining example of their father could surely inspire them to return from their inappropriate ways. They too could eventually become devout servants of Hashem and attain lofty levels of priesthood. Through their father's guidance they could also rise above their physical and mundane pursuits and develop the purest qualities. In fact, Yehoshua was told that his children could potentially perfect themselves beyond normal levels of human achievement. Hashem said, "I will establish them superior to these angels standing here." (3:7) Yes, Yehoshua's submissiveness could produce untold results and certainly lead his children back to perfect spirituality.

This same lesson is taught to us in this week's parsha regarding the newly appointed judges. We read about the masses of Jewish people straying from the perfect path demonstrating serious leanings towards certain physical and inappropriate dimensions of life. They disgraced the Heavenly manna bread which Hashem sent them on a daily basis and expressed their physical cravings for substitute foods such as; melons, onions and garlic. They even complained about the Torah's strict standards of morality and sought freedom from its taxing and demanding life. Hashem responded with a severe punishment which ended the lives of many thousands of Jewish people. But at the same time Hashem responded to a plea from Moshe Rabbeinu and instituted a structure of seventy elders to share the judicial responsibilities. During this process these hand-picked judges experienced an incredible transition. The Torah states, "And Hashem intensified the Heavenly Spirit which rested upon Moshe Rabbeinu and shared it with the seventy elders." (Bamidbar 11:25) In addition to

their new position as judges, these elders received prophecy and merited for a short time, to actually serve as a sanctuary for the Divine Presence.

Rashi comments on this incident and reveals the secret identity of the seventy elders. He quotes Chazal who explain, "These were the Jewish policemen in Egypt who were beaten mercilessly instead of their Jewish brethren." (Rashi to Bamidbar 11:16) These elders refused to enforce upon their brethren the unreasonable Egyptian demands and opted to accept torturous Egyptian blows on behalf of their brethren. This previous heroic act of self negation now served as a meaningful merit and lesson for the Jewish people. The recent outburst of the Jewish people revealed that they were embarking upon an immoral path, focusing on pleasure and self pursuit. Hashem responded to this by elevating a host of their own peers to the lofty position of leadership. These elders were not ensnared by self pursuit but were instead perfect role models of self negation. Their interest lay in spiritual association with Hashem and their selfless efforts brought them to the lofty achievement of personal sanctuaries for the presence of Hashem. With such personalities at the head of the Jewish people their direction could be effectively reversed. Their self sacrifice could secure the Jewish survival and hopefully remind the Jewish people never to plunge into self pursuit and immorality.

In our present times we hear repeated vibes of similar physical calls to immorality. We realize that our predecessors were also embers rescued from the fiery furnace-the fires of Europe-and their self sacrifice for the sake of Hashem surely serves as an everlasting merit for us. Our recollections of their total devotion to Hashem is a significant factor in the incredible transition for many of us from total physical pursuits to a sincere yearning to become sanctuaries of Hashem. May this new development continue to flourish and contribute to the hastening of Mashiach we so anxiously await.
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