

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

### Covenant & Conversation

**T**anakh, 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 Beha'alotcha

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 favour 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." (I 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

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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".

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, criticised; 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 shortcoming; But who does actually strive to do the deeds, Who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions, 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 neither know victory nor defeat.

Leadership in a noble cause can bring despair. But it also is the cure. *Covenant and Conversation 5777 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l ©2017 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org*

#### **RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## **Shabbat Shalom**

**T**he Jewish people seemed poised for entry into the Promised Land when suddenly; "The nation became a group of kvetchers, complaining evily in the ears of the Lord.... saying 'who will feed us meat? Remember the fish which we ate in Egypt for free, the cucumbers, the watermelons, the onions and the garlic'" (Numbers 11:1,4, 5)

The degeneration continues, Moses cries out to G-d that he has no meat to give the nation and that he can no longer bear the burden of leading them. The Divine response is to tell Moses to gather seventy men from among the elders of Israel who will help bear the burden and upon whom the spirit of the Lord will rest (11:16,17).

Why are the Jews so vexed and unsettled and how does G-d's response alleviate their feelings? They want meat and G-d tells Moses to give them 70 rabbis! After all of the miracles of the Exodus, it's difficult to understand the disillusionment of the Israelites and even more difficult to understand the solution offered by G-d.

I believe that the subtext of this triologue between the Israelites, Moses and G-d is that Moses is now being confronted by a new generation, by the youth who left Egypt and are now maturing into adulthood. This new generation has different needs and expectations to their parents. Each generation requires its own teachers; each generation has its own dreams, needs and vision. The adults who left Egypt with Moses required a Rav; their children who were now growing to maturity required a Rebbe.

It has often been said that the difference between a Rav and a Rebbe is that when a Rav chastises, everyone thinks he is speaking to their neighbor, whereas when a Rebbe chastises everyone feels that he is speaking personally to them. I believe there is another difference which emanates from this one. A Rav speaks with the voice of tradition and conveys the words of G-d to the entire nation, giving a message which expresses the vision of our eternal Torah for all generations. A Rebbe speaks personally to every individual, taking the eternal message of G-d and making it relevant to their needs. The Rav speaks to the generation; the Rebbe speaks to the individual in each generation.

Moses was an exulted prophet who came to the Israelites from the faraway palace of Pharaoh. He continued to lead them from the Tent of the Divine Meeting three parasangs (about 10.5 miles) from the encampment of the Israelites. Moses did not speak to the Israelites with his own voice since "he was heavy of speech and of uncircumcised tongue". He thundered with the voice of G-d presenting the Divine message of freedom and responsibility. His power which emanated from the Divine enabled him to unite the nation and imbue them with the confidence to follow him and G-d into the barren desert. Moses came from the distance and looked out into the distance. He was a ro'eh (with an aleph); a lofty and majestic seer.

Now, that the Jews had collectively left the land of oppression, followed their seer into the desert and were about to begin a new life in the Promised Land, they had to put the general and elusive notion of national freedom into personal perspective. Each individual had to understand how to utilize the gift of freedom to find their individual purpose and their individual expression within the context of G-d's land and G-d's Torah. Each individual had to find their own instrument within the divine symphony orchestra. For this, they required an individual pastor (ro'eh with an ayen and not an aleph). They could not articulate this

need because they didn't quite understand it. They thought their discomfort stemmed from boredom with the uniform, daily manna. That's why they were not even sure which food they wanted; meat, watermelon, leeks or garlic. What they really needed was individual nourishment for their souls. At first, Moses too did not understand what they needed and so, when he sent out the scouts to tour the land and inspire the people with its bounty, he told them "strengthen yourselves and take the fruit of the land" and bring back luscious grapes.

Ultimately, Moses understands this new generation requires a personalized Rebbe rather than a G-d – imbued Rav. This was a trait which one as close to G-d as Moses did not have the wherewithal to develop. His closeness to G-d and eternity conflicted with their immediate individual needs. Moses recognizes that this new generation requires a new leader: "Let the Lord G-d of the differing spirits of the various flesh and blood human beings appoint a leader over the congregation, one who will take them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the Lord not be like sheep without a shepherd." (Numbers 27:16).

Joshua was a very different type of leader to Moses, a great scholar and prophet, but also a man of the people. This made him the right person to bring this generation into the Promised Land. They had cried out for meat but what they really needed were rabbis: leaders, who would prophesy from within the encampment rather than from the distant Tent of Meeting where G-d resided. They needed a Rebbe. ©2017 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

#### RABBI BEREL WEIN

### Wein Online

The menorah has been one of the symbols of the Jewish people from time immemorial. It remains so today as well, it being one of the major symbols representing the Jewish state of Israel. The original menorah was cast and fashioned from one solid, large piece of gold. According to Jewish tradition, the construction of this great artifact was so detailed and complicated that it was beyond the ken of human talent and ability.

It was created miraculously, simply by somehow taking this great piece of gold and throwing it into a fire. From the midst of the fire sprang forth the menorah in all of its grandeur and beauty. The menorah represented the light of Torah, of G-dly wisdom and holy erudition. It represented not only light that illuminated the outside world and society but rather it spoke to Israel of an inner glow that emanated from the soul and from the physical senses of human beings.

In the words of the great rabbis of Torah: "does the Lord require its light?" The menorah itself was situated in the structure of the Temple in such a way that most Jews were never able to actually see it and

benefit from its glow. So it was that the light, so to speak, was really not on public display and was an inner light that made the menorah so symbolic of the Jewish people and its beliefs. Believe it or not, Judaism is truly more concerned with the spirituality and holiness of the individual rather than on outward appearances and public displays of piety.

Human beings instinctively treasure light and abhor darkness. Darkness covers evil deeds and nefarious plots. The animals of prey prowl at night in the dark. In a world of secrets, darkness is the most accessible cover. The menorah came to dispel such darkness. It is the light that was meant to reach all of humankind and to illuminate the otherwise dark recesses that lurk within us. It is no wonder then that this light was deemed to be an eternal one, constantly lit in the Temple and renewed day in and day out.

In our modern world, genius or the activity of ideas and innovation is often represented by cartoonists as a light bulb going on in our brain. This is because the flash of brilliance is always characterized as somehow seeing the 'light.' The initial creation of the universe, so to speak, is itself described as the beginning of light. The menorah carries with it this message of light, holiness and of hope and optimism. That is why there can be no more fitting symbol for the Jewish people and for Israel than that of the menorah.

In King Solomon's wisdom, he constructed ten additional menorot to adorn the Holy Temple. The subtle message here is that there can never be enough light, for it nurtures our souls and guarantees our eventual success in physical and spiritual terms. ©2017 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](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)

#### **RABBI AVI WEISS**

## **Shabbat Forshpeis**

**M**oshe (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. ©2017 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

#### **DR. ARNOLD LUSTIGER**

## **Vort from the Rav**

**"M**ake yourself two silver trumpets...they shall be used by you to summon the congregation and to announce the departure of the camps." (Bamidbar 10:2)

There are two ways in which people become

bound as a group—as a community, a society, or a nation. The first is when they face a common enemy. They band together for mutual protection, knowing that only by so doing can they survive. This phenomenon extends far beyond Homo sapiens. Animals, too, come together in herds or flocks to defend themselves against predators. Such a group is a machanehaa camp, a defensive formation.

There is a quite different form of association. People can come together because they share a vision, an aspiration, a set of ideals. This is the meaning of edah, a congregation. Edah is related to the word ed, a witness. An edah is not a defensive formation but a creative one. People join to do together what none of them could achieve alone. A society built around a shared project, a vision of the common good, is not a machaneh but an edahanot a camp, but a congregation.

These are not just two types of groups, but in the most profound sense, two different ways of existing and relating to the world. A camp is brought into being by what happens to it from the outside.

A congregation comes into existence by internal decision. The former is reactive, the latter proactive. The first is a response to what has happened to the group in the past. The second represents what the group seeks to achieve in the future. Whereas camps exist even in the animal kingdom, congregations are uniquely human. They flow from the human ability to think, speak, communicate, envision a society different from any that has existed in the past, and to collaborate to bring it about.

Jews are a people in both these two quite different ways. Our ancestors became a machaneh in Egypt, forged together in the crucible of slavery and suffering. They were different. They were not Egyptians. They were Hebrewsaa word which means aon the other side, an outsider.a

Ever since, Jews have known that we are thrown together by circumstance. We share a history all too often written in tears. This is the covenant of fate. This is not a purely negative phenomenon. It gives rise to a powerful sense that we are part of a single storythat what we have in common is stronger than the things that separate us. Our fate does not distinguish between aristocrats and common folk, between rich and poor, between a prince garbed in the royal purple and the pauper begging from door to door, between the pietist and the assimilationist. Even though we speak a plethora of languages, even though we are inhabitants of different lands, we still share the same fate. If the Jew in the hovel is beaten, then the security of the Jew in the palace is endangered. Do not think that you, of all the Jews, will escape with your life by being in the kingas palace (Es. 4:13).

It leads also to a sense of shared suffering. When we pray for the recovery of a sick person, we do

so among all the sick of Israel.a When we comfort a mourner, we do so among all the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.a We weep together. We celebrate together. This in turn leads to shared responsibility: aAll Israel are sureties for one another.a And this leads to collective action in the field of welfare, charity and deeds of loving kindness. As Maimonides puts it: All Israelites and those who have attached themselves to them are to one another like brothers, as it is said, You are children of the Lord your G-d (Deut. 14: 1). If brother shows no compassion to brother, who then will? To whom shall the poor of Israel raise their eyes? To the heathens who hate and persecute them? Their eyes are therefore lifted to their brothers (Hilchos Matnos Aniyim 10:2).

All these are dimensions of the covenant of fate, born in the experience of slavery in Egypt. But there is an additional element of Jewish identity: the covenant of destiny (brit yeaud)aentered into at Mount Sinai. This defines the people Israel not as the object of persecution but the subject of a unique vocation, to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:6). Under this covenant, the Jewish people is defined not by what others do to it, but by the task it has undertaken, the role it has chosen to play in history. The Israelites did not choose to become slaves in Egypt. That was a fate thrust upon them by someone else. They did, however, choose to become G-das people at Sinai when they said, We will do and obey (Ex. 24:7).

"Destiny, call, vocation, purpose, task: these create not a machaneh but an edah, not a camp but a congregation." (Rabbi Jonathan Sacks Summary of Kol Dodi Dofek) ©2017 Dr. A. Lustiger & torah.org

#### **RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER**

### **Weekly Dvar**

**P**arshat Beha'alotcha's initial instructions involve the placing and lighting of the Menorah (candelabra), with its 7 candles. After describing exactly where Aron placed the Menorah, the following verse (8:4) exclaims that the intricacies of the Menorah was done precisely as G-d commanded Moshe, and exactly as He intended it, and "so did he make the Menorah". Who made the Menorah? The way the Passuk is phrased leaves doubt as to the subject of its statement. Was it G-d or Moshe?

Rashi reports that Moshe was unable to duplicate G-d's intricate instructions on his own, and ultimately threw the gold into the fire, and the Menorah emerged miraculously. It could be that the reason why the Torah was vague was to teach us the importance of effort. The Ramban explains that Moshe was credited with making the Menorah because he went through the painstaking efforts of trying to make it. Although he couldn't finish it, it was the effort that counted, and he was given the credit for creating the Menorah. We are

taught that we should always try our hardest, and the Torah is sending us an encouraging message that effort is in fact an achievement on its own. The Torah is telling us that as long as we're trying, we've already succeeded! © 2008 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.

**RABBI ZVI SOBOLOFSKY**

## TorahWeb

**T**he Song of the Leviim in the Beis HaMikdash"- these words conclude our daily tefilah. This song began in this week's parshah with the inauguration of the Leviim. Many years later the joyous song of the Leviim would become associated with tragedy. "Al Naharos Bavel-By the rivers of Babylon", is the chapter of Tehillim most associated with the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. This chapter focuses of the cessation of the Leviim's song at the time of the churban. The enemy taunted the Leviim-"Shiru lanu mishir Tziyon-Sing us the songs of Zion". Responding with the words that would accompany the Jewish people throughout its long Exile, the Leviim swore "Im eshkech Yerushalayim-If I forget you Jerusalem". This tragic chapter of Tehillim focuses primarily on the end of the role of the Leviim as singers in the Beis HaMikdash.

Chazal highlight the tragedy of the Leviim as they relate to us the precise moment the enemy entered the Beis HaMikdash. It was as the Leviim were singing that the defilement, and subsequently the destruction, of the Beis HaMikdash occurred. Why does the end of the Leviim's song play such a prominent role in the churban?

In parshas Ki Savo we read about the terrible events of the churban and exile that will occur to the Jewish People. These curses are brought about by not serving Hashem, "BeSimcha uvtuv levav-with joy and a good heart. Service

of Hashem that is performed by rote without joy and enthusiasm can chas veshalom bring about churban. Chazal teach us the singing of the Leviim while the Kohanim offered korbanos is a fulfillment of "Simcha vtuv levav-joy and a good

heart". Song is the expression of the great joy that should accompany the service of the Beis Hamikdash in particular, and the service of Hashem in general. If this song is deficient it is indicative that the heart and soul of avodas Hashem is missing. The churban occurred as the Leviim were singing. Apparently their song was no longer a genuine expression of enthusiasm about avodas Hashem. As the Jewish People wept by the rivers of Bavel the realization set in

that the true song of the Beis Hamikdash had ceased years before, eventually bringing down the Beis Hamikdash. What can we do to rectify the situation of the churban we are in now? Looking to the Leviim may give us the answer. Besides their role in the Beis

Hamikdash, the Leviim were entrusted with another responsibility. The Leviim were not given land, rather they would be the spiritual leaders primarily by being the Torah scholars and teachers. In this role the Leviim also lead us in song. In parshas VaYeLech we are commanded "Kisvu lachem es hashira hazos-write for yourselves this song." Chazal interpret this to be referring to the sefer Torah. Why is the Torah likened to a song? The study of Torah must be with joy and enthusiasm just as one sings. It is the role of the Leviim as the singers of the Jewish people to sing the song of Torah as well.

The Beis HaMikdash is gone and its song silenced. Yet, we can still sing the song of Torah. We are taught by Chazal that from the day of the churban Hashem now dwells in the world of Torah. We must not only learn Torah but sing its song with the enthusiasm and joy that accompanies its study. Through our dedication to this second song of the Leviim may we merit to once again be inspired by the song of the Leviim as they accompany the avodas hakarbanos. May Hashem grant us "V'hashev Kohanim laavodasam Ulvim Ishiram ulezimram-Return the Kohanim to their service and the Leviim to their song." © 2009 Rabbi Z. Sobolofsky & TorahWeb.org

### ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

## Sounding the Trumpets

*Translated for the Encyclopedia Talmudit*

*by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss*

**A**ccording to the text of this week's portion the Mitzvah of sounding the trumpets presents itself during a time of war ( *Vchi Tavou Milchama B'artzchem*) and also a time of suffering and oppression (*Al Hatzar Hatzorer Etchem*). Some place these two requisites together and question (*Avnei Ezer*) whether this applies to wars that we are commanded to engage in (*Milchemet Mitzva*), since in such a case we are guaranteed success by Almighty G-d and it is not a time of suffering or oppression. The proof for this can be found in the war against Jericho when they blew the Shofar and not the trumpets (Joshua 6; 2).

On the other hand there are those (*Pri Magadim*) who say that the emphasis is on the word "*B'artzechem*" (in your land), implying that the blowing of the trumpet is only in the land of Israel when there is distress and persecution or if the majority of the Jews are in despair and sorrow. With this backdrop we can understand the actions of *Harav Shragai Faival Frank*, when in a time of anguish for the Jewish people he would sound the trumpets by the Wailing Wall (*Kotel*) to fulfill the positive Mitzvah of "And you shall sound the blasts of the trumpet ("*V'hareotem B'chatzrorot*").

In a time of war we sound the trumpets during a special prayer service designed for this purpose. This prayer service is similar to the prayers that we recite on

Rosh Hashanah, in that the body of the silent Amidah is divided into three parts—*Malchiyot, Zichronot and Shafarot*. Some believe that this service is held at the place where the war is actually transpiring as we see from various references and descriptions of the wars of the *Maccabim*. ©2016 Rabbi M. Weiss and *Encyclopedia Talmudit*

### YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

## Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA  
SICHA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL ZT"L

Summarized by Rav Elyahu Blumenzweig

Translated by Kaeren Fish

**"W**hy was the parasha dealing with the menorah juxtaposed to the parasha dealing with the princes of the tribes? Because when Aharon witnessed the role of the princes in dedicating the mishkan, he was saddened at not being among them, representing his tribe. G-d said to him, 'On your life -- your [task] is greater than theirs, for you light and prepare the candles.'" (Midrash Tanchuma Bamidbar 5)

The Ramban expresses surprise at these words: what reason could there possibly be for Aharon to feel saddened -- Aharon, who entered the Kodesh Kodashim on Yom Kippur, who brought the meal-offerings of the Kohen Gadol and was involved in other sacrificial tasks that were his responsibility alone? And even more surprising -- what consolation did he find in G-d's assurance regarding the re-dedication of the Beit Ha-Mikdash by the Hasmoneans (according to the Ramban's explanation of G-d's answer)?

It seems that the princes of the other tribes did in fact merit to perform a special task, which Aharon envied: that of the dedication of the mizbe'ach (altar). They were the ones who dedicated G-d's mishkan; they were the first to bring their sacrifices to the mishkan. Aharon envied their sense of initiative, of being the first. The forces which are unleashed and revealed by virtue of the primary act are enormous and wondrous. The steps which follow are built on the previous ones, on that primary act, and they reinforce what already exists. Hence the great importance of the first step, which serves to form and lay the foundations of the future edifice.

With that first step, with the laying of the foundations of any endeavor, all the power is drawn from the future, from the vision which will be realized from that moment onwards. Such actions, which draw their power from the view towards the future, contain tremendous inner strength.

Thus the Ramban explains that just as the princes were equal in wisdom, so were the measures of each of their sacrifices equal. Remarkably enough, this was achieved without any consultation or previous agreement between them. Each prince did his own calculation according to his personality and his

considerations, and each ended up with the same decision as the others. This, then, reveals the principle that the forces which are connected to the primary act are all derived from a single sublime source, influencing and being influenced by it.

This was the primacy which Aharon sought, and his lack of participation in this act is what saddened him. And it was in response to that sadness that he was told that he, too, would merit to perform an initiatory act -- that of lighting the menorah. In general, every act or task is an addition and reinforcement to what already exists. But lighting always comes only when that which existed previously has already been extinguished, such that each time the lighting is a separate act which does not derive its strength from the acts which preceded it. Each act of lighting represents continual renewal, without any reliance on the past.

"A mitzva is a candle, and the Torah is light" -- Torah is truly a light, and at its foundation is the idea that each day Torah should appear new and fresh to us. We are to study Torah and engage in the mitzva with eye to the future, with the expectation of the realization of our goals. Then the future and the goal will provide the great power contained in the primary step, which is continually being renewed.

If there is any period in a person's life which symbolizes primacy and originality, and power drawn from the future, it is the time of youth. This was the period in the life of the nation when the Torah was given, the period of "chesed ne'urayikh" -- as G-d says, "I remember the lovingkindness of your youth" (Yirmiyahu 2). It was during this period that the tremendous powers contained within Israel were revealed, when they followed G-d with boundless yearning and longing, "When you walked after me in the desert, in an unplanted land..." (ibid.).

The Zohar teaches that prior to the generation which left Egypt and received the Torah, there was another generation in which the Torah should have been given -- the generation of the Flood. That, too, was a period of "youth," a time when tremendous powers were revealed and great strides were made in many areas of life. But this was a time of "the sins of youth" -- the great powers contained in this beginning were directed towards negative ends, and led to destruction and ruin. The generation of the desert demonstrated "forces of youth" directed towards lovingkindness (chesed) and hence became worthy of receiving the Torah.

### RABBI BORUCH LEFF

## Kol Yaakov

**T**he first Rashi in Parshat Be'Ha'alotcha raises a puzzling question. (Loose translation): "Why was the section of the Menorah placed near the passage dealing with the offerings of the princes of Israel? Because when Aharon saw the offerings

brought by the princes, at the Tabernacle inauguration ceremony, he became depressed. Neither he nor his tribe, Levi, was involved in it. G-d told him, "Your task is greater than theirs! You prepare and light the candles of the Menorah!"

Aharon was depressed because neither he nor his tribe was involved in the Dedication of the Tabernacle. Firstly, who should be depressed? Wasn't Moshe the titular head of the tribe of Levi? He was the leader of all Israel, a greater prophet than Aharon, and seemingly the leader of the tribe of Levi as well. Aharon is only the leader of the priests, a sub-set of Levi. Why then is Aharon morose? And why isn't Moshe depressed?

In addition, has Aharon forgotten something? Hasn't he seen his brother, Moshe, actively involved in the inauguration ceremony? He was the one commanded by G-d to convey all directives of the construction of the Tabernacle. Moshe brought many of the sacrifices and did most of the service of the dedication (See VaYikra, Chapter 8). How can Aharon claim then that the tribe of Levi was uninvolved?

The solution is this. Moshe, by dint of his becoming the leader of the entire Jewish People, was no longer a member of the tribe of Levi. When one is the national leader, he loses his provincial and parochial interests. He personifies the nation, not merely one tribe.

Moshe's involvement in the Tabernacle cannot be seen as Levi's involvement. His involvement is the Jewish People's involvement. He is the leader of all, and all Jews see themselves in Moshe. As Maimonides writes: "The king's heart is the heart of the entire community of Jews." (Laws of Kings 3:6)

This is why the Torah states that a rebellion against the king of the Jewish people warrants the death penalty. It is not merely a revolt against one individual but against the entire nation.

This idea is also why King David is the author of Psalms. The Book of Psalms is the expression of the soul of the Jewish nation. You can open Psalms at any time in your life and find chapters that are intellectually relevant, and emotionally fulfilling. It is almost as if King David studied the hearts of each and every one of us and knew the challenges we continuously face. This is because David was king and therefore the heart of the people. David understood our joys and our pains, our passions and our frustrations. Through being the collective heart of Israel, he understood what flows through our hearts for all generations. This is why



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Psalms is a book as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago, when it was first written.

We may not realize it, but at certain times in our lives, we are all leaders. Some of us are parents, some of us head classes, some of us lead groups, and some of us lead prayers. We all lead at times. How can we lead effectively and properly?

We must always remember to peer into the hearts of the people we lead. We must feel their pain and joy. We must discover what is important to them and address their concerns. We must become the embodiment and the heart of the people.

We must never forget the true purpose of leadership. Never can we take leadership roles for selfish reasons and self-aggrandizement. Certainly, we must never abuse our power. Maimonides writes concerning a king but his words apply to all leaders:

"His heart must be low. He must not lead through conceit and haughtiness. He must be merciful and gracious to all and walk around with the concerns of his subjects on his mind. He must respect the honor of those who are smaller than he. He must be exceedingly humble." (Excerpts from Laws of Kings 2:6)

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