

The Narrow Bridge

גשר צר מאוד

PARSHA PERSPECTIVES

Short Divrei Torah on Parshas Beha'aloscha

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Lubavitcher Rebbe

"When you kindle the lamps, seven lamps should shine towards the face of the Menorah." (8:2)

The *menorah* symbolizes the Jewish people. The *menorah* has seven branches, symbolizing the different paths in Divine service, but is made of a single gold piece. The various differences and qualities do not detract from the unity. It means that diversity need not lead to division.

Each individual talent should lead to a synthesis of different views and behavior. Each individual should internalize the teachings and he should be able to teach others.

LOVING KINDNESS

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

"When you kindle the lamps, seven lamps should shine towards the face of the Menorah." (8:2)

Parshas Behaalosecha begins with G-d instructing Aharon to light the *Menorah* with the candles facing its center. Rashi explains that Aharon felt dejected because his tribe was not listed in the preceding list of tribe offerings. G-d was addressing his disappointment by giving Aharon a task that is more eternal than a one-time offering. However, why would G-d need anyone's help to light the *Menorah*? The Midrash explains that this was to elevate the entire Jewish nation. How does this act of Aharon lighting the *Menorah* satisfy Aharon's feelings and elevate an entire people?

Rabbi Henoch Leibowitz answers by describing two levels of *chesed*. The basic level of kindness is compassion for the plight of others, while the higher level stems from a feeling of love. The difference lies in the way others receive these acts. While giving with kindness may leave the recipient feeling indebted, giving fueled by love makes the recipient feel loved, wanted, and appreciated. When G-d asked Aharon to light the *Menorah*, He was making Aharon a partner. Giving and helping from a place of love and acceptance has the potential to change not only our interactions, but the world as well.

NURTURING THE FLAME

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"When you kindle the lamps, seven lamps should shine towards the face of the Menorah." (8:2)

G-d instructed Moshe to tell Aharon that whenever he would light the lamps of the *Menorah*, he should hold the fire to the wick until it remained burning steadily on its own.

Spiritually, this means that when we "light the flame" of our own soul or the soul of another person, we should not just deliver some quick inspiration and then move on. We should remain near, nurturing the soul's flame until it becomes a steady and self-reliant glow. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 2, p. 316-317) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

MENORAH OF TORAH

Divrei Noam

"When you kindle the lamps, seven lamps should shine towards the face of the Menorah." (8:2)

In this connection it is written: The beginning of Your words shed light, and it is according to the view of the one who says that the height of the *menorah* was seventeen handsbreadths. (Midrash Pliya)

The *menorah* had seven stems, nine flowers, eleven pomegranates and twenty-two cups. There is some controversy as to the *menorah's* height; authorities cannot agree whether it was seventeen or eighteen handsbreadths.

The number of parts of the menorah correspond to the number of words in the opening *pesukim* of each *sefer* in the *Chumash*. Thus, the seven stems correspond to the seven words in the first *pasuk* of Bereishis, the eleven pomegranates to the eleven words in the first *pasuk* of Shemos, the nine flowers to the nine words in the first *pasuk* of Vayikra and the twenty-two cups to the twenty-two words in the first *pasuk* of Devarim. Similarly, the seventeen words in the opening *pasuk* of Bamidbar account for the *menorah's* height - seventeen handsbreadths.

According to the one who says that the *menorah's* height was seventeen handsbreadths, this is the sense of the Midrash starting with "the beginning of Your words shed light." All the figures pertaining to the *menorah* correspond to the opening *pesukim* of the Books of the *Chumash*.

THE SEVEN CANDLES

Rebbe Nachman

"When you kindle the lamps, seven lamps should shine towards the face of the Menorah." (8:2)

"Beha'aloscha - when you light" literally means "when you raise up." When one kindles a flame, it rises up. (Rashi)

The *Menorah* had seven lamps, or candles. A person's head corresponds to the *Menorah*: his "seven candles" are his two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and mouth. When he sanctifies his "seven candles" - sanctifying his mouth by refraining from speaking falsehood, his nose by inculcating fear of G-d, his ears by having faith in the sages, and his eyes by shutting them against evil - then the flame of his heart will rise and illumine his face with G-dly light. (See Likutey Moharan I, 21)

ETERNAL FLAME

Rabbi Alexander Zusia Friedman

"When you kindle the lamps, seven lamps should shine towards the face of the Menorah." (8:2)

Why is the section dealing with the *menorah* put in juxtaposition with the section describing the princes' offerings? Because Aharon, seeing the dedication of the princes, became uneasy, since he was not with them at the dedication. But the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "Upon your life, your part is more important than theirs, because you will kindle the lamps and set them in order." (Rashi)

Why was the lighting of the lamps in the Sanctuary more important than the offerings made by the tribal princes? The Midrash Rabbah explains: "The offerings could be made only as long as the *Beis HaMikdash* was standing, but the lamps will always be kindled."

This explanation is difficult to understand. Once the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed and the offering of sacrifices has ceased, where should the lamps be kindled? According to the Ramban, G-d's promise refers not only to the lamps of the *Beis HaMikdash* but also to the Chanukah *menorah*. G-d gave Aharon the promise that one day his descendants, the Chashmonites, would have a part in miracles that would bring about a second dedication at which a *menorah* would be lit, and that the duty to kindle those lights of rededication would be binding on the Jewish people even when there would be no *Beis HaMikdash*. These are the lights of which the Midrash Rabbah states will always be kindled.

UNITED PURPOSE

Rabbi Aryeh Dachs

"When you kindle the lamps, seven lamps should shine towards the face of the Menorah shall the seven lamps cast light." (8:2)

The first verse in Parashas Behalosecha is an instruction for Aharon Hakohen, the *Kohen Gadol*, on the correct way to arrange the lights of the *Menorah* in the Temple. When he lights the *Menorah* every day, he must arrange the wicks in each half of the six branches of the *Menorah* so that each wick is turned toward the middle light, the face of the *Menorah*. The three wicks on the right face left and the three wicks on the left face right. The verse ends this instruction by stating that "this is how to light up all seven wicks." This seems odd because the instruction here is to configure six of the branches, not all seven; the middle one is left alone.

The Seforno explains that there is a deep symbolism at play here. The verse should be read as follows: When the three lights on the right and the three lights on the left face the center, *then* all seven can illuminate, together.

He explains that the right side of the *Menorah* represents the people who are on the right, those who are primarily focused on the spiritual, *chayei olam*. Whereas the left side corresponds to those in our community who are on the left, whose primary focus is on the temporal, *chayei shaah*.

Without the "left" who support those that study, the "right" cannot exist. It goes without saying that *Yiddishkeit*, Judaism, cannot exist without the righteous amongst us who are dedicated to studying and maintaining a high spiritual level.

The lesson of the *Menorah* is that all seven branches, which represent the entirety of Israel, will only glow when those who primarily study, those who primarily work, and everyone in between, will align to the same singular goal, which is symbolized by the middle of the *Menorah*.

The Seforno explains that the Torah is designed to be fulfilled not by individuals as much as by all of us working together to elevate the presence of G-d here. This is evidenced in Parashas Yisro where the verse emphasizes that when the Torah was accepted, all of Israel answered *yachdav* - as one, *naaseh* - we will observe the Torah.

I've heard people complain regarding the burden of those who study in *yeshivos* and *kollelim*. They feel like some of these on the right side do not have enough regard for how they will support themselves and their families. I've heard people in *yeshivos* and *kollelim* complain about the lack of spiritual focus and devotion of the *balei batim*, the working folk on the left side. Ultimately both murmurers are missing the point. We all have different roles, and we all have one unified goal. The Torah is designed for all of us to appreciate our shared greater goal and to work together to achieve it. The *Menorah* teaches us that understanding from both sides of the spectrum is necessary to fulfill our one shared goal, together.

CONSTANT YEARNING

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"When you kindle the lamps..." (8:2)

As Shlomo HaMelech says (Mishlei 20:27), "The lamp of G-d is the human soul." The flame of a candle constantly flickers upward, as if yearning to leave the wick behind and ascend heavenward. The soul shares this nature, constantly striving to reconnect with its spiritual source by breaking out of the boundaries of time and space imposed on it by the body and the physical world.

At times, however, this nature becomes dormant. The soul is so blinded by its surroundings that it forgets its natural thirst for Divinity. This is why every morning - after every period of spiritual darkness - our soul-lamps must be re-kindled. They must be reminded of their innate desire to ascend. Whether it is our own soul or that of someone with whom we come in contact - or even the soul of someone we have never met but have only heard about - if we see that it is not aflame, it is our privilege and challenge to re-kindle it. (Sefer HaMa'amarim Melukat, vol. 3, pp. 185-190) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

THE LIGHT OF THE TZADDIK

Reb Noson of Breslov

"When you kindle the lamps, seven lamps should shine towards the face of the Menorah." (8:2)

When you want the lamps to illuminate, shine their light towards the "face of the *Menorah*" - i.e., towards the strength and teachings of the center column, the *tzaddik*. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 126)

The seven lamps of the *Menorah* represent the seven shepherds (Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef and Dovid). Moshe, the true *tzaddik*, corresponds to the center lamp, towards which the other six lamps face.

The *tzaddik* is the conduit through which all rectifications take place. *Beha'alotcha et ha-neirot* (when you light the lamps) literally means "when you raise up the lamps," referring to the ability of the *tzaddik* to elevate all the fallen souls to return to G-d. Just as the *Menorah* was formed from a single piece of gold, all the necessary rectifications are interconnected and attained through the *tzaddik*. The verse hints at this process with the words *Ad yereikah ad pirschah* (from its base to its flower) (Bamidbar 8:4). *Pirschah* (its flower) also translates as "to bloom," implying that even the *Yerekh* (the lowest levels) will "bloom" and shine with the illuminations received from the *tzaddik*.

According to Rashi (Shemos 25:31), Moshe had difficulty picturing how the *Menorah* would look until G-d showed him the image of a fiery *menorah* (Rashi on). This teaches us that all rectifications actually derive from G-d Himself, Who helps the *tzaddik* illumine the lower levels.

The lamp symbolizes the soul, as it is written (Mishlei 20:27), "The lamp of G-d is the human soul."

When you wish to light up the soul, you must do so towards the "face" or countenance of the *Menorah* - this is the *tzaddik*, whose countenance shines for all of Israel. This countenance will light up even the darkest nights and the darkest places.

The seven lamps of the *Menorah* correspond to the "seven fat cows" [i.e., days] and the "seven lean cows" of Pharaoh's dream (Bereishis 41:1-4).

Despite the darkness that can overwhelm a person - especially the darkness he draws upon himself through sin - the soul can be rekindled if it stands by the *tzaddik*. (Likutey Halakhot I, p. 258)

FEELING THEIR PAIN

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"And so Aharon did; toward the face of the Menorah he lit its lamps, just as Hashem commanded Moshe." (8:3)

Aharon HaKohen was highly regarded for his outstanding ability to make peace between people. He was involved in settling so many domestic disputes that when he died, the Midrash tells us that 80,000 boys named Aharon walked in the funeral procession! These were all the babies born after Aharon had brought peace back into the lives of their parents and were named Aharon as an expression of their appreciation!

How did he do it? What was the secret to Aharon's success? The *Mashgiach*, Rav Shlomo Wolbe zt'l, explains that Aharon HaKohen felt their pain. It wasn't distant from him; their pain was his pain.

The only way one can truly help someone is if he feels the other person's pain and anguish. When a person is undergoing a trying moment in life, he really is experiencing a double tragedy. Aside from the problem itself, he must also deal with the loneliness and helplessness he feels because of the situation. He looks around and sees other people smiling, laughing, enjoying life and he feels so alone, so different and so left out.

Rav Wolbe says, if someone would take the time to listen to the person pour out his heart and try to empathize and feel the pain of his fellow Jew, he will have alleviated the more severe aspect of the problem, and he gives his friend strength so that the difficulty itself becomes manageable.

Chazal tell us that Aharon HaKohen merited to wear the *Choshen* (Breastplate) over his heart, which allowed him to receive direct responses from Hashem, because he truly felt the heart of the people.

It was also, perhaps, the reason he was chosen to light the lamps in the *Beis HaMikdash* - because he brought so much light, peace and harmony into the lives of his fellow Jews.

KEEPING IT FRESH

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld

"And so Aharon did; toward the face of the Menorah he lit its lamps, just as Hashem commanded Moshe." (8:3)

This week's Parshah begins with the directive to Aharon HaKohen to light the *Menorah*. The verse says, "וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן" - "and he did so," which means, as Rashi explains, that Aharon did not deviate at all from what Hashem commanded him.

The obvious question is, what is so praiseworthy about not deviating from the command of Hashem? It is obvious that Aharon, one of the greatest men of the generation, did exactly what Hashem told him!

There was a flag boy in Russia, who had the job of holding a lantern to direct the trains at a railroad junction, directing the trains which way to go throughout the night. One evening there was a terrible accident. Two trains collided and there were many casualties. The boy was brought to court to be prosecuted for his neglectful behavior. In the Russian system, there was no clemency for mistakes. The boy was standing trial for his life.

The judge asked the boy, "Were you holding the lantern?"

The boy replied, "Yes, judge."

"Did you direct the trains to the right destinations?"

"Yes sir, I did," said the boy.

The judge dismissed the case, exonerated the boy, and sent him home. The chief prosecutor leaped forward and said, "Excuse me, judge, but you missed the most important question! Was the lantern lit?!"

This anecdote can be used to explain the praise the Torah gives Aharon. The Sefas Emes explains that when the verse teaches that Aharon did not deviate from what Hashem told him, it does not mean literally that he did not deviate from fulfilling his instructions, for indeed that is obvious. Rather, the Torah is pointing to something deeper. For Aharon, the lighting of the *Menorah* every day did not become a mechanical habit. He lit the *Menorah* anew every day with the same *hislahavus*, freshness, and excitement as if he were doing it for the first time.

How often do we do *mitzvos*, day in, day out, and we feel like our *Avodas Hashem* has become a little stale? We *daven*, we learn, we put on *Tzitzis* and *Tefillin*, and it feels very monotonous.

What we can learn from Aharon HaKohen is how to perform recurring acts of *mitzvos* with a renewed sense of enthusiasm every day, and to feel the excitement and *geshmak* in our *yiddishkeit* even as we perform so many of the *mitzvos* on a regular basis. As the Kotzker Rebbe sharply said, "It's one thing to revive the dead. It's quite another thing to revive the living."

FLAME OF DEVOTION

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"And so Aharon did; toward the face of the Menorah he lit its lamps, just as Hashem commanded Moshe." (8:3)

Rashi quotes the Gemara (Shabbos 21a): "Since a flame rises, therefore (the *pasuk*) uses an expression of '*aliyah* - rising,' for one must kindle the wick until the flame rises by itself." Just as a person must hold a fire to a candle's wick in order for it catch and become a flame, so, too, notes Rav Yaakov Katina zt'l (Korban Ha'Ani), each person must hold steadfast in his service of Hashem until his actions take hold and become an integral part of him, thereby allowing his flame of devotion to rise ever higher in the service of his Creator.

It is told that late one night, Rav Yisrael Salanter zt'l happened to pass by the house of a shoemaker, and observed him working diligently by the fading light of a candle.

"Why do you work so late?" Rav Yisrael asked him. "The candle will soon go out, and you won't be able to continue making shoes. Why don't you stop already?"

The shoemaker barely looked up. "It really makes no difference," he said. "*Vi lang di licht brent, ken men noch farichten* - As long as the candle keeps burning, one can still make repairs."

Rav Yisrael was deeply affected by this remark. He would often use this as a metaphor of a person's diligence. "If a simple shoemaker continues working for his material needs as long as the candle burns and its light can be used, certainly a man should work for the needs of his soul as long as the lamp of Hashem - the soul of a man - is still burning, and repair as much as one possibly can!"

UNWAVERING HUMILITY

Sifsei Kodesh

"And so Aharon did; toward the face of the Menorah he lit its lamps, just as Hashem commanded Moshe." (8:3)

This is in praise of Aharon that he did not change. (Sifri)

It's human nature to grow conceited as one rises in the world. Not so Aharon. "Thus did Aharon" - he did as the lamp does. Just as the light of a lamp remains the same irrespective of whether the lamp is raised or lowered, so too, Aharon was in no way changed by the honors he received.

(As Reb Simchah Bunim of Pshischa taught: Although Aharon had been privileged to attain astonishing honors, he never changed. He became neither conceited nor arrogant, but remained as humble and meek as he had been before.)

SEEING THE BRIGHT SIDE

Rabbi Jeremy Finn

"And so Aharon did; toward the face of the Menorah he lit its lamps, just as Hashem commanded Moshe." (8:3)

At the beginning of the *parashah*, Hashem teaches Moshe Rabbeinu the laws connected to the lighting of the Menorah and instructs him to teach these laws to Aharon HaKohen, which he does.

It then says (8:3) that *"ועש כן אהרן אל מול פני המנורה העלה"* - Aharon did so, toward the face of the *Menorah*, he kindled its lamps."

On these words, Rashi makes a startling comment: *"להגיד - שבחו של אהרן שלא שינה"* - These words are said in praise of Aharon that he didn't change," and followed the instructions that his brother Moshe had given him. What is Rashi trying to tell us? Would we think for a moment that Aharon would ignore the Divine command and act differently? What does Rashi mean?

The Torah is telling us *בהעלתך* - If you want an *aliyah*, if you're going to elevate your life and be successful, then always look to the light; always see things positively, be optimistic, and be brave.

- Not everything in life goes the way we want it to, but hopefully most things do.
- Not every person we meet will treat us fairly and kindly, but hopefully most people will.
- Not every dream and aspiration that we have for the future will come to fruition, but *b'ezras Hashem* most of them will.

בהעלתך - If we want to be happy and successful, then look at the light and be positive.

There is much about which we can be negative, cynical, and pessimistic, but happiness and success are derived from looking at the *neiros* and having the attitude that no matter what, we will succeed.

Perhaps this is the message that Rashi is teaching us concerning Aharon HaKohen. Who more than Aharon was justified in thinking that perhaps the odds were stacked against him? When he was young, his parents separated. His younger brother was thrown into a river. He was passed over as leader of *Bnei Yisrael* in favor of that younger brother. He suffered the loss of two children, and finally, he was denied entry into *Eretz Yisrael*!

Aharon had good reason to be negative, pessimistic, and cynical, yet the *pasuk* says, *ועש כן אהרן העלה* - he elevated his life. And how? *נרות* - He always looked at the positive side of things, he was *אוהב שלום ורודף שלום* (Avos 1:12) by always teaching people to be positive, optimistic, and brave.

That is the praise of Aharon HaKohen - that despite good reason, he did not change from Moshe's instruction of *בהעלתך* - of elevating himself and always looking at the *נרות*.

MELODIOUS HUMILITY

Chavos Yair

"And so Aharon did; toward the face of the Menorah he lit its lamps, just as Hashem commanded Moshe." (8:3)

This is in praise of Aharon that he did not change. (Sifri)

In this connection, Rabbi Shmelke of Nikolsburg interpreted the verse (I Melachim 3:15), "And the minstrel became like the instrument and the spirit of G-d was upon him," as follows: If the minstrel will become like the instrument he plays - when, similar to an instrument that is not changed by the beautiful tune it plays, he, too, will not be affected by the awareness of his own virtues - then G-d's spirit will be upon him and he will be found worthy of being endowed with prophetic vision.

MAINTAINING THE ENTHUSIASM

Rabbi Moshe Schochet

"And so Aharon did; toward the face of the Menorah he lit its lamps, just as Hashem commanded Moshe." (8:3)

Rashi comments on the words *"Vaya'as kein Aharon - And Aharon did so,"* that the Torah praises Aharon because he didn't deviate from any of the instructions that he was given. Many commentators attempt to explain what Rashi is trying to emphasize regarding Aharon's diligence in performing the *mitzvah* of lighting the *Menorah*.

The Sfas Emes suggests that Rashi's explanation is highlighting that from the very first time that Aharon lit the *Menorah* until the very last time that he kindled the *Menorah*, Aharon's excitement did not dwindle. Aharon's enthusiasm to perform this *mitzvah* was equal throughout his entire life.

It is very common for our passion to be at an all-time high when we first take on a *mitzvah* or begin a new spiritual initiative. Unfortunately, it is equally natural for that excitement to dissipate as the *mitzvah* becomes part of our routine. The Sfas Emes is teaching us to learn from Aharon's approach and ensure that each *mitzvah* and project that we take upon ourselves is invested with continual energy and enthusiasm. Let us make sure that we give every *mitzvah* our all, which will surely result in a deeper bond with Hashem.

STUBBORNNESS AND ONENESS

Reb Noson of Breslov

"And this is how the Menorah was made: it was hammered gold. From its base to its flower, it was one hammered piece. According to the image that Hashem showed Moshe, so did he make the Menorah." (8:4)

The design of the *Menorah* was *mikshah* (מקשה, hammered), implying that one must be *akshan* (עקשן, stubborn) in his service of G-d. (Likutey Halakhos II, p. 154)

The *Menorah* was made from a single block of gold. (Rashi)

The *Menorah* featured many cups, flowers and other ornamentations which made it seem as though it was comprised of many parts. But in fact, it was molded from a single piece of gold. The truth is only one, and in order for the light of spirituality to shine, everything must be united as one. (Likutey Halakhot IV, p. 56a)

Thus, although the *Menorah* had a base, stems, flowers and cups (which connote differences), it was made to illumine the truth of the One G-d. (ibid., V, p. 199a)

ACCORDING TO THE EFFORT

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

"And this is how the Menorah was made: it was hammered from gold to its base, to its flowers..." (8:4)

It is peculiar that the Torah chose to discuss the making of the *menorah*, which baffled Moshe Rabbeinu, only after it discussed the lighting of the *menorah*.

The Chiddushei HaRim explained that the Torah is revealing to us that *menorah* was able to shine specifically because making the *menorah* was difficult for Moshe Rabbeinu (the word "מְקֻשָּׁה - hammered" comes from the word "קושי - difficult"). And this is how it is with all matters that a person struggles with. To the degree one exerts himself and puts in effort, light will shine forth accordingly.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL...

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"Aharon shall wave the Levites as a wave-offering before Hashem from the Children of Israel and they will be entrusted to do the worship of Hashem." (8:11)

The Torah tells us something remarkable: When it was time to elevate *Shevet Levi* above the rest of *Bnei Yisrael*, Moshe gathered together the entire population of the *shevet* and placed them in front of his brother, Aharon. Aharon then lifted up each and every person - 22,000 individuals - in one day and "waved them before Hashem." One would think that this was surely a miracle; in fact, most commentaries understand it as such.

However, Rabbeinu Bechaye interprets this literally: Aharon HaKohen actually lifted up every single member of *Shevet Levi* - 22,000 people in the course of one day, and "waved" each and every one of them! It was an incredible display of the power and unimaginable strength of Aharon HaKohen. Practically speaking, though, is such a thing even possible? Can we fathom how one man - over eighty years old at the time - can accomplish such an amazing feat by himself?

The answer is, yes! One man can accomplish a great deal - even things which seem to be beyond human ability - through extreme effort and willpower.

It was said that this was how the great Sephardic Gaon, Chacham Rabbeinu Chaim Palagi zt'l, managed to author one hundred and twenty-six *sefarim* in his lifetime. (Unfortunately, 54 of his works were lost in a terrible fire in his hometown of Izmir, Turkey). Many speculated on the ability of one man to write so many *sefarim*, to the extent that a rumor spread which claimed Rav Chaim employed certain holy Names of Hashem, which allowed his thoughts to miraculously be penned on paper and become ready for print.

His son dismissed this and other rumors. "It is true that my father probably was familiar with these special Names," he said. "Yet it was his incredible resolve and will to accomplish this feat that enabled him to do so. There was no miracle; his willpower to succeed was even stronger than the power of a miracle!"

Therefore, based on the words of Rabbeinu Bechaye, we must conclude, that through sheer determination and an iron-clad will, Aharon HaKohen lifted up and waved 22,000 *Leviim*.

AVAILABLE TO ALL

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"For given, given are they [the Leviim] to Me, from among the Children of Israel." (8:16)

Maimonides teaches us that anyone "whose spirit has motivated him and whose perception has enlightened him to set himself apart [from mundane life] in order to stand before G-d and serve Him... has [by this fact] been hallowed as the holiest of the holy." (Mishneh Torah, Shemitah v'Yovel 13:13)

We might conclude from Maimonides words that in order to lead a G-dly life, we have spiritually matured to the point at which our "spirit has motivated us and our perception has enlightened us" to dedicate ourselves to this lofty goal. But we see from the installation of the Levites that this is not true. The Talmud (Kiddushin 23b) tells us that an agent cannot be empowered to accomplish more than his dispatcher can by himself. Thus, if the Levites are our agents, it means that we have the spiritual power to do all that they do.

All of us, even those who feel that they have not yet progressed to this point, can be a spiritual Levite, "setting ourselves apart from mundane life in order to stand before G-d and serve Him" by fulfilling our Divine mission in making the world into G-d's true home. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 13, p. 15) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

LOVE FOR ALL

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

"I have taken the Leviim in place of every firstborn among the Children of Israel. Then I have given the Leviim to be presented to Aharon and his sons from among the Children of Israel..." (8:18-19)

On the verse “And I have given...” Rashi explains that “the term ‘Children of Israel’ is mentioned five times in this one verse in order to demonstrate how cherished Yisrael is by G-d.”

When a person chooses something from among several possibilities, this demonstrates that he loves that item more than all the others - since he chose that one over all the other items. Now here, where G-d chose the *Leviim*, one might think, Heaven forbid, that since G-d chose the *Leviim*, He doesn’t love the rest of Yisrael. Therefore, “Children of Israel” is mentioned five times in this very verse, to indicate that G-d loves the Jewish people just as He does the *Leviim*. His choice of the *Leviim* was only so they could serve in the *Beis HaMikdash* in order to atone for the Jewish nation.

ONE AND THE SAME

Chiddushei HaRim

“I have given the Leviim, to be presented to Aharon and his sons, from among the Bnei Yisrael, to perform the service of Bnei Yisrael in the Tent of Meeting and to provide atonement for Bnei Yisrael so that there will not be a plague among the Bnei Yisrael when the Bnei Yisrael approach the Sanctuary.” (8:19)

The Children of Israel are mentioned by name five times in this *pasuk* in order to show in what affection they are held by G-d. The mention of them is repeated five times in one *pasuk* corresponding to the Five Books of the Torah. (Rashi)

Why the special emphasis on the *Bnei Yisrael* in this particular section? Since only the Levites were chosen for the service in the Sanctuary, the other tribes may have wondered why they had not been considered fit to perform these functions. Therefore, the Torah chose this particular place to recall the affection in which they are held by G-d. Even as the Torah is composed of five separate books which are independent units, yet all combine to form one Torah - so, too, the Jewish people are divided into *Kohanim*, *Leviim* and *Yisraelim*, representing separate units, each with its own function but combined to form one great nation extremely precious and important to its G-d.

ESSENTIAL AND LOVED

Rabbi Moshe Schochet

“I have given the Leviim, to be presented to Aharon and his sons, from among the Bnei Yisrael, to perform the service of Bnei Yisrael in the Tent of Meeting and to provide atonement for Bnei Yisrael so that there will not be a plague among the Bnei Yisrael when the Bnei Yisrael approach the Sanctuary.” (8:19)

Rashi comments that the words “*Bnei Yisrael*” are repeated five times throughout this *pasuk*, corresponding to the five books of the Torah, in order to show Hashem’s love towards the Jewish people.

The Kotzker Rebbe (Ohel Torah) explains that this *pasuk* seems to place the *Kohanim* and *Leviim* on a pedestal, separate from the rest of *Klal Yisrael*. The Torah highlights the prominent role the *Kohanim* and *Leviim* would play in regard to *Bnei Yisrael*’s service of Hashem. When *Bnei Yisrael* heard about his, they shared their concern with Hashem; they felt less important relative to the *Kohanim* and *Leviim*. Therefore, Hashem alleviated their concerns by mentioning *Bnei Yisrael* five times in this *pasuk* in order to demonstrate how much Hashem loves each member of the Jewish people.

Hashem views each Jew as their own independent book of the Torah that ultimately comprises the entire Torah, just as the *Kohanim*, *Leviim* and *Yisraelim* make up the entirety of *Klal Yisrael*. This served to recognize each Jew’s value, which in turn comforted *Bnei Yisrael*.

Rashi’s and the Kotzker Rebbe’s insights provide us with powerful *chizuk*. We often look at the tremendous accomplishments of other people, which makes us feel less valuable. We feel that our roles as members of *Klal Yisrael* pale in comparison to what others may have achieved. Rashi and the Kotzker Rebbe remind us that Hashem loves us individually and considers each of us as important as one of the books of the Torah.

With this perspective, we are sure to recognize our own self-worth and utilize our talents and abilities towards propelling *Klal Yisrael* forward in our personal and collective relationships with Hashem.

NATION OF GIVERS

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

“Moshe, Aharon, and the entire assembly of the Children of Israel did to the Leviim according to everything that Hashem had commanded Moshe about the Leviim.” (8:20)

As the *Leviim* are initiated to service, the Torah relays to us that “Moshe, Aharon, and the community leaders did [singular] for the *Leviim* [what they were instructed], just as G-d had commanded Moshe regarding the *Leviim*, so the people did [plural] for them” (8:20).

Why does the Torah recount a simple adherence to instructions in such a long way, and why does the *pasuk* use singular and plural forms of the word “did”?

Gur Aryeh points out that what Moshe contributed to the process is not the same as what Aharon, the leaders, or anyone else contributed. Everyone made his own powerful contribution (hence the singular form), which amounted to a collective achievement (hence the plural form) that was both unique and compelling.

The words “for them” reveal that everyone’s motivation was to help another, and similarly, just two *pesukim* later, we are told that the *Leviim* performed their service “for them.” The use of the exact phrase indicates that the *Leviim* reciprocated the people’s efforts by dedicating their efforts to others. This cross-giving is a powerful way to build a nation, a family, or any relationship.

NEVER TOO LATE

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"From twenty-five years of age and up, he shall join the legion in the service of the Tent of Meeting." (8:24)

The Levites were given the responsibility of carrying the Tabernacle and its vessels through the desert. G-d led the Jews through the desert with the Tabernacle - in which His presence was openly manifest - in order to subdue the forces of evil, which the uninhabited, uncultivated, desolate, and dangerous desert embodied.

Similarly, our own environment can sometimes seem like a spiritual "desert," devoid of G-dliness. In fact, it may sometimes seem to us that we ourselves have become a "desert" - i.e., that we have developed habits that are contrary to our task of spreading Divine consciousness. How can we possibly hope to change ourselves (let alone the world around us) when these habits and modes of behavior have already become ingrained within us?

Here, we can learn from the Levites. They did not even begin training for their occupation until they were 25 years old, yet they were nevertheless empowered to begin their holy service at this age. G-d gives us, too, the ability to remake ourselves and begin new directions in life, even though we may feel unqualified, unprepared, or unworthy to carry them out. All we have to do is make use of His assistance. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 13, pp. 16-19) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

LEAVING A LEGACY

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

"The Children of Israel shall make the pesach-offering in its appointed time. On the fourteenth day of this month in the afternoon shall you make it, in its appointed time; according to all its decrees and according to all its laws shall you make it." (9:2-3)

On the first anniversary of the Exodus, the children of Israel are instructed to bring the *Pesach* offering in its appointed time (9:2). In the next *pasuk*, the Torah instructs, "You [Moshe] shall make it [the *Pesach* offering] in its appointed time" (9:3). It seems reasonable that stating this law once would be sufficient. Why, then, would the Torah repeat itself in the very next sentence? And why mention Moshe, a human who does not live forever, in a lasting law?

Rav Hirsch suggests that the first instruction is for future generations, while the second is meant to address Moshe directly as a means to acknowledge the immortality of the community he created. This honorable mention highlights the critical concept of community that Moshe initiated.

Just as Moshe created a lasting community that will honor him eternally, we, too, have the opportunity to leave a lasting legacy in our respective communities that will forever endure.

SIEZE THE OPPORTUNITY

Rabbi Moshe Schochet

"Why must we be left out from presenting G-d's offering..." (9:7)

The Torah (9:6-12) relates a dialogue that took place between Moshe and a group of people who had become impure because they had come in contact with a dead body. They were concerned that as a result of their impurity, they would not be permitted to participate in the *korban pesach*. They approached Moshe asking, "*Lama nigara* - Why should we lose out on this opportunity?" As a result of this inquiry, Moshe spoke with Hashem, and the *mitzvah* of *Pesach Sheini* was introduced.

The Chiddushei HaRim questions why these people were so upset. What did they mean when they asked, "Why should we lose out?" They were impure and by definition exempt from the *mitzvah* of *korban pesach*. They weren't really missing out on anything if they weren't obligated to begin with.

The Chiddushei HaRim explains that these people were on such a high level that they desperately wanted to connect with Hashem as much as possible. The fact that they were exempt was irrelevant to them. Their fear of missing out was simply because they craved the opportunity to do *mitzvos*, whether they were obligated or exempt. It was because of their intense desire to do *mitzvos* that the *mitzvah* of *Pesach Sheini* was introduced in their merit.

This insight of the Chiddushei HaRim is inspiring. How often do we look for the easy way out and justify and rationalize why we should be exempt from a *mitzvah*? Instead, we need to fear that we are missing out. We must recognize that when a *mitzvah* presents itself, it is not a burden, rather it is an opportunity to grow closer to Hashem. Let us personalize this message and grab every chance we have to fulfill the *mitzvos* of the Torah with passion and enthusiasm. In the merit of this approach, we too will receive tremendous blessings in all our spiritual endeavors.

DEMANDING A CONNECTION

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"Those men said to them, 'Although we are impure by reason of a corpse, why must we be left out from presenting G-d's offering...' (9:7)

These Jews fully understood why they could not offer up the Passover sacrifice along with everyone else, but they still complained, saying, "Why should we be left out?" They not only felt excluded from the community's positive experience; they felt as if their very lives depended on it.

Their heartfelt cry caused G-d to grant us the holiday of the second Passover, a second opportunity for redemption.

We can learn from their example. Because we are living in exile, we, too, cannot offer up the Passover sacrifices. But we can cry out to G-d, demanding the opportunity to connect with Him fully, feeling that the missed opportunity to do so jeopardizes our very lives. If we truly complain and fervently demand this of G-d, He will surely redeem us from exile and rebuild our Temple, affording us the opportunity to connect with Him in the fullest way possible. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 22, pp. 215-216) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

DESPITE ANY IMPURITY

Reb Noson of Breslov

"Those men said to them, 'Although we are impure by reason of a corpse, why must we be left out from presenting G-d's offering...'" (9:7)

The passage describing the *mitzvah* of *Pesach Sheini* (a second opportunity to bring the *Pesach* sacrifice in the month of Iyar for those who were ritually impure or who were traveling during the *Pesach* festival a month earlier, in Nisan) should have been taught by Moshe directly, like the other *mitzvos*. Instead, it was revealed through those who were impure, because they were worthy people (Rashi).

Though they were ritually impure at the time of the offering of the *Pesach* sacrifice, these Jews never stopped trying to become pure or to seek rectification. "Why should we be lacking [the *mitzvah* of] *Pesach*?" they asked. Thus, despite their impurity, they were worthy people. (Likutey Halachot VII, p. 54a)

Though a person may be impure, he should never shy away from wanting to do a *mitzvah*. This longing constitutes true repentance.

The Jews who were in a state of impurity at the time of the Exodus were not able to perform the *mitzvah* of *Pesach*. Yet they still approached Moshe and pleaded with him to find a way for them to be allowed to serve G-d. Because of their strong desire, not only did they find a way to fulfill the *mitzvah*, but they were actually worthy of adding a passage to the Torah! (Likutey Halachot II, p. 103a)

EMPOWERED BY THE PEOPLE

Karliner Rebbe

"Moshe said to them, 'Stand and I will hear what Hashem will command you.'" (9:8)

Because of Moshe's humility, he insisted that because of the merits of the Israelites they should stand next to him to hear "what Hashem will command."

Moshe felt that if they were not near him, he would not merit hearing "what Hashem will command you."

REWRITING THE PAST

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"He must offer it up in the afternoon of the fourteenth day of the second month..." (9:11)

The lesson of the second Passover is that it is never too late to set things right. Even if one is spiritually sullied or has wandered far from the realm of holiness, G-d still gives him a fresh opportunity to rewrite the past and to right all wrongs. (HaYom Yom, 14 Iyar) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

TWO PATHS

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"He must offer it up in the afternoon of the fourteenth day of the second month..." (9:11)

Passover requires preparation, abstinence from leaven, and lasts for a week. The second Passover, in contrast, requires almost no preparation, no prohibition of leaven, and lasts for one day.

This is because at Passover - our annual rebirth as a people and as individuals - we begin life anew, with a clean slate. As such, we can follow the path of righteousness, ascending the ladder of spiritual growth by refraining from all evil and doing only good. The second Passover, in contrast, is the path of repentance. Repentance occurs as a sudden inspiration, and therefore does not entail extensive preparation. Repentance is a humbling admission of fault, and therefore leaven and the inflated egocentricity it represents are not threats. Finally, repentance is a radical departure from our previous, flawed behavior, which occurs in an instant and is therefore celebrated for only one day.

In the dynamics of spiritual life, we are sometimes on the path of righteousness and sometimes on the path of repentance, and should therefore become expert at following both. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 18, pp. 120-122) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

SAFE AT HOME

Rabbi Akiva Eiger

"And the man who is pure and not on a journey..." (9:13)

It is fairly common that when a person is home and in his regular environment, he fulfills the *mitzvos* and behaves properly because it is part of his normal routine. However, when a person is on the road, whether for business or especially for pleasure, i.e. vacation, he tends to go off his routine and that's when he forgets to do and act as he should.

This is alluded to in the words of the *pasuk*: "*V'ha'ish asher hu tahor* - And the man who is pure" - untainted by sin, "*u'vderech lo hayah* - and he was not (traveling) on the way..."

BRIGHT NIGHT

Reb Noson of Breslov

"In the evening, there was an appearance of fire..." (9:15)

When one merits, then even the night becomes illuminated like the day. (Likutey Halakhot I, p. 99a)

FOLLOWING HASHEM'S LEAD

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

"And whenever the cloud lifted from the Tent, the Children of Israel would set out accordingly..." (9:17)

As the Jews wandered the desert, a cloud hovering over the *Mishkan* would cue when to camp, how long to stay, and when to leave. The Torah spends seven *pesukim* describing how they followed the clouds prompts, which begs the question of why the need to be so verbose.

The Lekach Tov suggests that humans are naturally curious beings that try to understand their surroundings. The problem is that we are limited by our intellectual capacity and by the information we are given. We do not see the consequences or future of our reality. These *pesukim* point out a level of precise compliance that the Jewish people achieved. This acceptance enabled them and can enable us to trust in G-d's guidance and live at peace with His direction.

SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"On the word of Hashem did the Children of Israel travel, and on the word of Hashem did they camp; all those days on which the cloud rested..." (9:18)

The Jewish people never knew in advance how long they would be staying at any given camp - it could have been for a day or for years. Nonetheless, they would set up the Tabernacle in its entirety at each encampment, following G-d's instructions to keep the Tabernacle functioning at all times.

This teaches us two important lessons. First, we should recognize that it is G-d who leads us through all our journeys in life - whether geographical, emotional, mental, or spiritual. We should indeed make our own plans based on our lives' goals, but at the same time, we must realize that G-d knows when it is in our best interest to stay put or to move on to the next station in life, and that He arranges things accordingly.

Second, we should not "put our lives on hold" when we are in temporary situations. Since G-d is beyond time and place, when we connect with Him even for one moment, that moment lasts for all time. Whether a personal journey lasts a day or a decade, we can make it into a sanctuary, imbued with the eternal permanence of G-d's presence. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 2, p. 687) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

LEARNING HOW TO WALK

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"On the word of Hashem did the Children of Israel travel, and on the word of Hashem did they camp; all those days on which the cloud rested over the Tabernacle, they remained encamped." (9:18)

Regarding the travels of *Bnei Yisrael* in the desert, the *pasuk* initially informs us: "On the word of Hashem did *Bnei Yisrael* travel, and on the word of Hashem did they camp."

Two *pesukim* later, however, it is reversed: "By the word of Hashem they rested and by the word of Hashem they traveled." What is the significance of the reversed order of the *pesukim*?

The Degel Machaneh Ephraim, Reb Moshe Chaim of Sedlikov zt'l, uses a parable to explain:

When a baby is learning to walk, his father holds him tightly and helps him move forward. Then he moves a short distance away and waits to see if the child can reach him on his own. Each time the child is successful, his father moves further and further away to test the child and see if he is sufficiently capable of walking on his own.

Our Father in heaven works with us this way as well. When we are young, Hashem gives us great capabilities and the drive and energy to elevate ourselves in *avodas Hashem*. He literally "holds our hand" and guides us on our way. As we become older and more mature, though, Hashem "let's go" and waits to see if we can respond on our own. As we progress, He tests us more and more by allowing us to range on our own from ever-further distances.

This is alluded to in the *pasuk*: "By the word of Hashem they traveled." First, Hashem holds our hand as we travel forward, establishing ourselves in the service of Hashem. Only then, "By the word of Hashem did they camp" - He lets us go and allows us to walk on our own.

After the initial test is passed, Hashem reverses His mode. He "moves back" and waits for us to draw close, and then, He brings us in and elevates us.

REVEALING G-DLINESS

Reb Noson of Breslov

"On the word of Hashem did the Children of Israel travel, and on the word of Hashem did they camp; all those days on which the cloud rested over the Tabernacle, they remained encamped." (9:18)

Each encampment or travel was a *tzimtzum* (constriction) that created a place where G-dliness could be revealed.

The same applies to our movements today: we each have the ability to reveal G-dliness through our travels. (Likutey Halakhot III, p. 65a)

EMBRACING THE JOURNEY

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld

“On the word of Hashem did the Children of Israel travel, and on the word of Hashem did they camp; all those days on which the cloud rested over the Tabernacle, they remained encamped.” (9:18)

I was thrilled about my upcoming vacation. It had been a difficult year with lots of challenges, and I was excited to spend the next three weeks in a gorgeous hotel.

The pictures I saw had looked amazing - including the Olympic-size swimming pool, the basketball court, and the elegant dining room. However, to my disappointment, when I arrived at the hotel, it looked nothing like the pictures. The swimming pool was full of leaves, flora, and various unappealing creatures. There was no hot water in the showers and the food was far from gourmet. I had no way of getting my deposit back and I couldn't afford another hotel. I stayed there for the duration of the three weeks and settled for what it was.

The following year I decided to learn from my mistake and spent hours doing research, looking closely at every detail of the hotel I had chosen.

When I arrived, I anxiously went around checking everything, and indeed my efforts were not in vain. Everything was absolutely magnificent. Fresh pastries had been placed in the room, the swimming pool was immaculately clean, the food was delicious, and to top it all off the members of the staff were very warm and friendly.

The day after I arrived, I received a phone call informing me of a medical emergency of a family member which required me to return home immediately. I had been so excited to finally be able to spend three weeks in a magnificent setting, yet Hashem had decided otherwise and I had to leave.

This is what *Klal Yisrael's* journey in the *Midbar* looked like. The verse tells us that על פי ה' יחנו ועל פי ה' יסעו - they traveled according to the will of Hashem. That means that there were certain times when *Klal Yisrael* traveled to a very uncomfortable place and stayed there for many weeks. On other occasions they arrived at a beautiful place but a few hours later were told to move on.

Life takes us on a journey to many different places, some of which are comfortable and some which are uncomfortable. The question is, how will we respond? How will we process the different destinations that we find ourselves in?

If we recognize that everything we have, and whoever we meet, and whatever happens to us is על פי ה' we will live a much more peaceful existence, and we will not be constantly fighting against what comes our way. We are traveling in this world for just a few years and if we can accept and embrace life with the attitude that everything is perfectly orchestrated by Hashem, this world will be a much more comfortable, pleasant, and fulfilling place.

HEARING THE CALL

Reb Noson of Breslov

“Make for yourself two trumpets out of hammered silver. They will be yours to summon the community and to send the camps out on their travels.” (10:2)

The silver trumpets were sounded for several reasons: to gather the people for announcements or for study, to signal the start of a journey, to call the people to arms, and to commemorate the Festival offerings.

On a symbolic level, the trumpet sounds were the hints and allusions that prod a person to return to G-d. Each sound contained a different hint, a different “wake-up call” to return to G-d. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 40a)

MINDFUL OF OTHERS

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

“Make for yourself two trumpets out of hammered silver. They will be yours to summon the community and to send the camps out on their travels.” (10:2)

The Ralbag, who was a student of the Ramban, comments: Hashem told Moshe that when they sounded both trumpets, the entire nation were to assemble by the *Mishkan*; however, if only one trumpet was sounded, then only the *Nesiim* (the leaders of each tribe) shall assemble.

If so, why should the trumpet be blown and heard by all 600,000 Jews when only twelve *Nesiim* are to assemble? Why couldn't Moshe simply send a messenger to notify the twelve *Nesiim*?

The Ralbag answers that if Moshe would send a messenger, then the twelve *Nesiim* wouldn't all receive the message at the same time. Then the *Nesiim* may have been offended by the order in which they were informed. In order to avoid any pain to the *Nesiim*, through the one blast of the trumpet, all the *Nesiim* were notified simultaneously. We see then the great lengths the Torah would go to ensure that not one person would be offended!

SOUNDING OUR TRUMPET

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“When you go to wage war... sound short blasts...” (10:9)

(G-d instructed Moshe to make two silver trumpets. Moshe was to use these trumpets to summon the people when he wanted to speak with them, as well as to signal that it was time to travel. In addition, the people were to blow the trumpets in times of battle and when offering up communal sacrifices on the festivals.)

We are constantly fighting against our inborn materially-oriented passions. This fight is particularly intense during prayer, when these passions can distract us, keeping us from concentrating on G-d and deepening our relationship with Him.

The inner “trumpet” that we sound in order to enlist G-d’s help is our acknowledgment of how dependent we are upon His assistance in this struggle. When we beseech G-d to come to our aid, He rescues us from our enemy.

But we see here that we must blow the trumpets not only while in the thick of battle, but also when we have overcome the enemy - and even on joyous festivals. Blowing the trumpets on these occasions reminds us that even if we have made great strides in spiritual growth, and no longer feel the downward pull of material passion, we are still dependent upon G-d’s assistance in order to maintain and properly utilize our spirituality. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 13, pp. 28-29) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

WAKE-UP CALL

Reb Noson of Breslov

“You should blow the trumpets over your burnt-offerings... They shall be a remembrance for you before your G-d. I am Hashem, your G-d.” (10:10)

Hearing the *shofar* is propitious for memory. It is a “wake-up call” to remember the World to Come. (Likutei Halakhot II, p. 182a)

DIVINE PROTECTION

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“And the ark of G-d’s covenant traveled a three-day journey ahead of them, to seek out a resting place for them.” (10:33)

In all of their travels in the desert, the Jewish people were preceded by this ark and by the cloud of G-d, which led the way and cleared the path of potentially harmful animals and obstacles. And so has it been in the long history of the Jewish people: Throughout our journeys, whenever we follow the “ark” - i.e., the light of the Torah - we have found spiritual and physical rest. We are protected from the emotional and physical dangers of the world, enabling us to find true meaning in our existence. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 8, p. 288) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

CONSTANT REINFORCEMENT

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

“And the ark of G-d’s covenant traveled a three-day journey ahead of them, to seek out a resting place for them.” (10:33)

After nearly a full year from when the Jews arrived at Mount Sinai, the cloud rises from the *Mishkan*, signaling their impending departure, and travels three days ahead of them to find their next resting place. The Jews immediately start complaining about the journey and all else not going their way. What happened that suddenly made them seem like malcontents?

The Maharsha explains that the Jews’ three days without Torah caused them to lose their perspective. This concept is the source for reading the Torah every Monday and Thursday to avoid accruing three days without exposure to Torah. This idea also highlights the importance of consistency, such that when we develop good habits, we should reinforce them consistently and not allow ourselves to lose the momentum we’ve built.

THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“They traveled from the mountain of G-d a distance of three days, and the ark of G-d’s covenant traveled a three-day journey ahead of them, to seek out a resting place for them.” (10:33)

Our lives, too, are a journey from “the mountain of G-d” - our original point of inspiration - toward “the Promised Land” - our personal and collective redemption.

As we proceed along this journey, we must keep “the ark of G-d’s covenant” ahead of us, meaning that we should always look to the Torah for guidance.

Furthermore, we must keep focused on the goal, the fact that the Torah is “seeking out a resting place for us,” meaning that no matter how settled we may become in our setting or routine during our lives, we cannot truly “rest” until we have reached the goal of transforming both our personal lives and the world at large into G-d’s ultimate home. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 13, pp. 302-303) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

RAISING THE BANNER

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

“And it was whenever the Ark departed, Moshe would say, ‘Rise, Hashem, and may Your enemies disperse, and may those who hate You flee from before You.’” (10:35)

These well-known words are recited in our prayers each time we open the *aron kodesh* and remove a *sefer Torah* in *shul*. We may wonder why it is that specifically at this time we reiterate Moshe’s words to implore Hashem to rise up and rid us of our enemies.

Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt”l was once speaking at a *chanukas habayis* ceremony for a new *yeshiva* in the holy city of Yerushalayim. He very eloquently drove home the point that whenever one begins a new endeavor to raise up the banner of Torah and spread its glorious wisdom to others, the *Satan*, the greatest enemy of the Jewish people, is always present, attempting to thwart his lofty plans. This is his eternal profession; this is what he is created to do.

Thus, we pray that we receive Heavenly assistance to accomplish the goal of raising the banner of Torah and not, *chas v’shalom*, falter due to the insidious schemes of the *Satan*.

ALWAYS BY OUR SIDE

Rabbi Jeremy Finn

"Whenever the Ark departed, Moshe would say: 'Arise, Hashem, and let Your enemies be scattered...'" (10:35)

If we look in a Sefer Torah, we will see that these two *pesukim* are bracketed with an inverted letter 'נ'. Rashi explains that this is to alert us to the fact that these two *pesukim* do not belong here. The reason why Hashem placed them here is to break up two episodes where the Jews displayed less than satisfactory behavior.

When *Am Yisrael* left *Har Sinai*, they did so like a school pupil "escaping" at the end of the day. Instead of trying to delay their leave as long as possible to absorb the atmosphere of the Sinai experience for a few extra moments, the Jews bolted as soon as they were instructed to travel. This showed that they perhaps did not appreciate the true significance of the Divine revelation and *Kabbalas HaTorah*, and their behavior was not looked upon favorably by Hashem.

The second unsavory episode was that of the *misonenim*, when the Jews complained to Moshe about the *mann* and displayed a lack of appreciation for the miraculous sustenance that Hashem provided.

So that these two happenings should not be read in one continuous flow, Hashem inserted these two *pesukim* into the Torah to create a break in the narrative.

The Alter from Slabodka makes a fascinating comment related to this Rashi. He challenges us to look at the two *pesukim* that Hashem uses as His buffer. These two *pesukim* describe how when the *Aron* travels, the enemies of *Klal Yisrael* will be scattered and will flee from us.

Why were these *pesukim* used as the buffer? Of all the *pesukim* that could have been inserted to break up the flow of negativity, why choose these two?

The Alter from Slabodka answers that these two were chosen not just to act as a buffer, but to deliver a message as well. The message is that even when we have fallen and have acted inappropriately, Hashem will still take our side and protect us. Even if we are engaged in negativity, He will still smash our enemies and scatter them. His love for us is so great that it is more durable than our misbehavior.

Rabbi Dov Katz, a student of the Alter from Slabodka, adds that now we can understand why these two *pesukim* are bracketed with two inverted letter *nuns* and not any other letter of the alphabet. The Gemara tells us that the only letter missing from the *Ashrei* chapter of Tehillim is the letter 'נ'. This is because the letter 'נ' stands for *nefilah* (נפילה) - falling, i.e., when someone falls and behaves in a manner that is at odds with Hashem's wishes. Such sentiment has no place in a prayer devoted to praising Hashem's glory.

It is precisely for this reason that this letter is chosen to bracket these two *pesukim* and is inverted.

We should never think that because we are experiencing a *nefilah* - a moment of challenge in our relationship with Hashem - that He abandons us. The opposite is true. During the times of challenge themselves, Hashem declares how much He loves us. As we fall, He takes the 'נ' of *nefilah* and turns it upside down and inside out to declare that our *nefilah* can and will be reversed, and that He loves us no matter what. This is the message of the placement of ויהי בנסוע הארון and the two letter *nuns*.

In the middle of a crisis, when we have moved away from Hashem and His Torah and when we are struggling with our relationship with the Almighty, we need to remember that He is on our side and loves us. When we are running away from *Kabbalas HaTorah*, complaining, and showing ingratitude, Hashem will show us His love with two inverted letter *nuns* and ויהי בנסוע הארון!

FROM CALAMITY TO BLESSING

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"Whenever the Ark departed, Moshe would say: 'Arise, Hashem, and let Your enemies be scattered...'" (10:35)

We encounter an unusual dynamic in this week's parshah - the double, backwards "*Nuns*." The Gemara (Shabbos 115) tells us that these letters serve as a set of brackets, to separate two sad and unfortunate events with one happy and memorable event. The first regrettable incident was the *manner* in which the Jews hurriedly left from *Har Sinai* after receiving the Torah "like a child escaping from school." The second disaster that befell the Jews was the saga of the *mis'onenim* - complainers, who sought to drive a wave of depression into the people to get them to leave the desert and make their way back to Egypt. Hashem, in composing the Torah, could not allow these two episodes to stand side by side. He therefore inserted the travel procedure of the *Aron HaKodesh*, a positive passage to separate these ignominious events. Why was all this necessary? And what is the significance of the letter "*Nun*?"

The Maharsha, Rabbi Shmuel Eidels zt'l, provides a deeper meaning. In the *tefillah* of *Ashrei* that we *daven* three times a day, the first letter of each *pasuk* is categorized in alphabetical order, beginning with the letter "א" and ending with the letter "ת." The only letter that is conspicuously absent from the beginning of a *pasuk* in the entire chapter is the letter "נ." Chazal explain that this letter denotes misfortune and misery, because it represents "*nefillah*" - falling. The way to turn such misfortune and disaster into happiness and good tidings is by turning the letter "נ" inside out.

Thus, when the Torah recounts two calamitous episodes in the history of *Bnei Yisrael*, we find that they are separated - with the interval of the Holy Ark - by backwards *Nuns* to indicate that through the power of the Torah which is placed in the *Aron*, we can turn our calamities into good fortune.

PUTTING UP A FIGHT

Reb Noson of Breslov

"The people began to complain..." (11:1)

They sought ways to distance themselves from G-d. (Rashi)

Everyone has an evil inclination that attempts to distance him from G-d. This is especially true for those who begin to draw close to G-d but falter and fail, time and again. The evil inclination puts up all kinds of barriers and frustrations to deflect a person's energy away from G-d, but he can fight back with even the smallest effort to come closer. On his final day, when he must give an accounting for his every thought, word and deed, those efforts towards serving G-d - no matter how insignificant they seem - carry much weight. (Likutey Halakhot VII, p. 205a)

JUST AS THINGS SHOULD BE

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

"The Children of Israel also wept again, and they said, 'Who will feed us meat? We remember the fish we ate in Egypt free of charge...' (11:4-5)"

These verses teach us that the Jewish People were not satisfied with the *mannah* they received, for even though it tasted of almost any flavor they could imagine - including fish and meat - they nevertheless wanted "real food," even suggesting that they were better off back in Egypt! (See Rashi 11:4 who tells us that the protagonists were in fact the *Eirev Rav* - the Egyptians who left Egypt with the Jewish People; however, the Jewish People nevertheless wept with them in a testament that they too were complaining about the situation.)

The nagging feeling of being able to "do better elsewhere" is a challenge many of us face in different areas of our lives. However, our quest for a better situation must come hand-in-hand with the understanding that we can never gain more than Hashem wants for us. And while we are obligated to make appropriate effort to secure a better situation for ourselves, our quest must come with the secure knowledge that Hashem - and only Hashem - is our Provider, and He is capable of supplying us with as much as we need, whenever we need it, and wherever we are.

The following story, told by the protagonist to Rav Yaakov Galinsky, shows just how true this message is. Yosef (not his real name) was having difficulty finding a livelihood in Vienna. So, like many other Jews, he bought a ticket to travel to America to gain his fortune. Although Yosef was not a *Chassid*, his friends convinced him to receive a parting blessing from Rebbe Yisrael M'Tshorkov. After explaining why he was there, the Rebbe responded, "You're going to America? Allow me to make you into a *shaliach mitzvah*" - someone actively involved in a *mitzvah* which offers protection from harm.

Yosef was delighted; he didn't even expect a blessing for the journey, and now the Rebbe was making him his personal emissary!

"Please send regards, in my name," said the Rebbe, "to... G-d in America."

"But Rebbe," Yosef said in embarrassed astonishment, "isn't He the same G-d as the One here in Vienna?"

"Ah!" said the Rebbe, "if He's the same G-d, then why are you going all the way to America for a livelihood? He could give it to you just as easily right here!"

Yosef took the message to heart, canceled his ticket, and remained in Vienna with a newfound trust in Hashem. Not only did his finances begin to turn around for the better, but staying in Vienna saved his life, for the ticket he purchased was for the Titanic which sank on its maiden voyage, drowning most of its passengers, including almost all of the male immigrants traveling from Europe to America.

FOCUSING ON THE POSITIVE

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

"We remember the fish which we ate in Egypt free of charge... but now, our bodies are dried up; there is nothing at all, nothing except for the manna to look at." (11:5-6)"

The Me'am Loez notes that any fish that the Hebrew slaves received free from the Egyptians was rotting, putrid, and dangerous to eat, which the Egyptians would have otherwise discarded. If so, how could the Jewish People recall the fish that they received in such a positive light and complain about the *mannah* - a food that came genuinely free on a daily basis (Shemos 16:4), and which miraculously tasted however they wanted (Yoma 75a), and caused no harm to their bodies (ibid. 75b)?

Perhaps we can answer that of course these complainers knew the fish that they ate was disgusting and dangerous to their health, but they focused on the single benefit they saw, as the Mizrachi notes: the fact that it did not come proportionate to their deeds; for unlike *mannah* which was easy to collect and cook for the righteous but difficult for the less righteous, the fish came to them regardless of their level of righteousness.

From here we can learn a frightening lesson in human nature - the ability to totally misrepresent a historical experience by focusing on a single aspect and ignoring the rest. These complainers ignored 99 percent of the bad that they experienced and focused on the 1 percent of good that they saw.

Although the Jewish People's complaints displayed a terrible ingratitude to Hashem, the ability to ignore so much bad and focus on the tiny amount of good can be very beneficial to our lives. And if we apply this to the way we view other people or difficult situations then we can greatly increase our inner peace as well as our love and respect for others.

One person who understood this message was Rav Noach Weinberg whose vision and success in bringing unaffiliated Jews to Torah observance is unparalleled.

Once asked to reveal his secret, Rav Noach pointed to a series of photographs behind his desk. They essentially showed “before” and “after” a person became religious. Pictures of young men with piercings and long hair next to their later years as men in black hats with large religious families. “Even when someone is standing in front of me looking like this,” said Rav Noach, pointing to the “before” photo, “I see this,” he said, pointing to the “after” photo.

GIVE AND TAKE

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

“The mann was like a coriander seed...” (11:7)

When a person gives charity, he becomes the benefactor of the poor person who receives it. Our Sages say (Vayikra Rabbah 34:10), “More than the householder does for the pauper, does a pauper do for the householder.” If so, the poor person actually becomes a benefactor for the householder. However, the difference is that the householder gives the poor person something tangible, whereas the poor person gives the householder something spiritual. That is, G-d gives the householder a reward in the World to Come: holiness and purity.

This same concept applies to the *mann*. The *mann* gave something to the Jewish people, in that they ate from it, and the benefit was somewhat physical. The Jewish people, in return, imbued it with a spiritual quality. As our Sages say (Yoma 75a; Shemos Rabbah 25:3), “Any flavor that they wished to taste in the *mann*, they would taste.” So it turns out that the *mann* received a spiritual quality, namely, the flavor that they wanted to taste. The fact that the *mann* received something from those who ate it is alluded to in the word used to describe the *mann* in the above-quoted verse. The word for “coriander” (גַּד) can be seen as an acronym for the words for “bestow to the poor” (גומל דלים).

This is what the passage alludes to when it says, “now the *mann* was like a coriander seed.” It alludes to the idea of giving charity to the poor, since the donor provides the one who receives charity with physical benefit, while the one who receives charity confers a spiritual benefit (i.e., reward in the afterlife) upon the donor. Similarly, the *mann* gave a material benefit to the Jewish people, whereas the Jewish people, in return, conferred a spiritual quality on it - its flavor.

So that is why the verse says that “the *mann* was like a coriander seed,” meaning, allegorically, “like a planting that benefits the poor.” Planting is a metaphor for charity, as our Sages (Bava Kamma 17a) remark on the verse (Hoshea 10:12), “Sow charity for yourselves.”

TRUSTED SUSTENANCE

Rebbe Nachman

“The people would stroll and gather it [the manna]...” (11:8)

Shatu (שטו, they strolled about) - *b’shtuta* (בשטותא, with foolishness). (Zohar II, 62b)

People who possess faith in Divine Providence believe that G-d will provide for their needs, and find joy in their lives. Those who lack faith, on the other hand, suffer from the curse “In sadness you will eat” (Bereishis 3:17), for they must work hard to earn a living. How much more foolish, then, are those who are avaricious! (See Likutey Moharan I, 30:4)

Shatu (שטו, they strolled about) - *b’shtuta* (בשטותא, with foolishness). (Zohar II, 62b)

The *manna* tell right at the doorsteps of those Jews who had the *da’at* (higher perception) to know that G-d would provide their sustenance without any effort on their part.

Those who doubted G-d and went out to search for the *manna* displayed a foolish lack of faith. Had they used their *da’at*, the *manna* would have fallen right next to them. The smaller a person’s *da’at*, the harder he must work to earn a living. (See Likutey Moharan I, 56:6)

Shatu (שטו, they strolled about) - *b’shtuta* (בשטותא, with foolishness). (Zohar II, 62b)

During the six weekdays, the Jews had to go out and collect the manna, which represents going out to earn a living. But on Shabbat, work is forbidden.

The six weekdays symbolize foolishness, whereas Shabbat symbolizes the *da’at* of the week - the knowledge that G-d provides for all His creations without their having to toil for it. (See Likutey Moharan I, 119)

ONCE A PARENT, ALWAYS A PARENT

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

“Have I conceived this entire people? Have I given birth to it...? From where shall I get meat to give to this entire people when they weep to me?” (11:12-13)

A young man traveled to the city of Ger to speak with the great Sefas Emes, Reb Yehudah Leib Alter zt”l. He had just gotten married, he told the Rebbe, and things were very difficult for him and his new bride as far as *parnasah* - livelihood was concerned. What bothered him the most was that his father, a wealthy man in his own right, had pretty much neglected him since the marriage. He adamantly refused to help support him and his starving household.

"What should I do?" asked the young man tearfully.

The Sefas Emes was moved by the young man's earnestness and heartfelt plea. The very next day, he sent a messenger to the young man's father asking him to come to speak with him. The father hastened to obey.

The Gerrer Rebbe informed him of his son's bleak situation, inquiring as to why he seemed to have shut out his son, totally refusing to help him out.

The man listened to the Rebbe respectfully and tried to justify his behavior. "Rebbe, all my life I have worked extremely hard to support my family, putting food on the table and giving them a comfortable life. I have even made sure to marry them off honorably. However, I do not feel obligated to continue supporting my married children. They are now on their own and should fend for themselves."

Wordlessly, the Gerrer Rebbe took out a *Chumash* and opened it up to Parshas Beha'aloscha. He came to the *pasuk* where *Bnei Yisrael* complained and cried to Moshe Rabbeinu that they had no fish or meat to eat. Moshe Rabbeinu, in turn, cried to Hashem, calling out, "Have I conceived this entire people? Have I given birth to it? From where do I have meat to give to this entire people?"

The Sefas Emes looked up at the man. "Why did Moshe Rabbeinu need to ask these first two questions instead of just saying that he had no meat to give the people and that he could not support them in the wilderness?"

"The answer is clear," continued the Rebbe with a smile. "Moshe Rabbeinu understood that had he actually given birth to the *Bnei Yisrael* and actually been their real father, he would have given no excuses for being overburdened! A father would continue to support his children with all his efforts, with no age limit on his generosity!"

WORTHY LEADERS

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"Gather seventy men for Me, from among the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the people's elders and its officers..." (11:16)

In order to take some of the burden of leading the Jewish nation off of him, Hashem gave this command to Moshe. It seems a bit redundant and not entirely clear how Moshe was to go about gathering the seventy elders. Why did Hashem add the words, "whom you know to be the elders"? How would Moshe know this?

Rav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi shlit'a expounds on the words of the Midrash (Sifri 11:16) that relates that when the Egyptians forced heavy labor upon their Jewish slaves, they would want to whip and beat them mercilessly. Rather than allow their brethren to be harmed by the Egyptian lords, the Jewish overseers took the brunt of the beatings instead. They said, "Better that we get beaten and the people should remain unharmed."

Thus, Hashem told Moshe to gather seventy elders, whom you know to be the elders of the people. Moshe, you know these people. These are the very same people that shielded the nation from harm and were beaten rather than allow their brothers to be harmed. These are the men who are worthy of being elders and leading the nation.

Rav Yosef Patzanovsky zt'l (Pardes Yosef) quotes the Imrei Noam that Hashem blessed the seventy elders when He placed His Holy Spirit upon them, saying to Moshe, "May they become patient people just as you are patient."

These two sterling qualities are what it takes to become a leader. One must be *nose b'ol im chaveiro* - willing to accept another's burden upon himself in order to shield him from harm, and he also needs to have a limitless amount of patience to deal with any and every issue or crisis that affects his brothers.

HASHEM'S "LONG HAND"

Rebbe Nachman

"G-d said to Moshe, 'Is the hand of Hashem too short? Now you will see if what I said will happen or not!'" (11:23)

Moshe asked G-d, "Even if all the sheep and cattle were slaughtered, would it suffice them?" (Bamidbar 11:22). G-d replied, "Will the hand of G-d come up short?" The word "short" implies Divine judgments, which restrain bounty. G-d's hand is not "short" - to the contrary, it is "long" and provides endless bounty.

To arouse G-d's "long hand," a person should tithe his income. Targum Onkelos renders the phrase "Would it suffice them?" as "Would it satisfy them?" When a person tithes his income, he displays his satisfaction with his lot, and then G-d extends His "long hand." Furthermore, when an individual tithes, he is saved from his enemies, because G-d's "long hand" stretches out to conceal him. (See Likutey Moharan I, 221)

ALWAYS CONSIDERATE

Rabbi Aryeh Dachs

"Yehoshua son of Nun, the servant of Moshe since his youth, spoke up and said, 'My lord Moshe, make an end of them!'" (11:29)

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter once remarked, "One who rushes headlong to perform a *mitzvah* can destroy the whole world in his path." The story goes that Rabbi Yisrael Salanter once noticed someone quickly racing into *shul* to say *Kedushah* with the congregation. In his haste, this person accidentally stepped on someone else's newly polished shoes. After *davening*, Rabbi Yisrael approached the gentleman and told the man that he was obligated to pay for the shoes to be repolished. Rabbi Yisrael then explained that the entire *mitzvah* of saying *Kedushah* would be lost if it came about through someone else's loss.

While in hot pursuit of a *mitzvah* we must be especially vigilant that we don't accidentally err and cause collateral damage in our quest to do the right thing.

This concept is apparent in an episode described at the end of Parashas Behaalosecha. The Torah relates that the prophets Eldad and Meidad prophesied in the camp. Yehoshua, the great disciple of Moshe Rabbeinu, as well as his successor and the future leader of the Jewish People, heard the report regarding the prophecy of Eldad and Meidad and declared to Moshe, "*Adoni Moshe, kela'eim* - My master, Moshe, imprison them!"

The Talmud also relates that Yehoshua never bore sons due to the fact that he decided the *halachah* in the presence of his teacher, Moshe. Which law? The law of *kela'eim*. Apparently, Yehoshua was incorrect in telling Moshe what to do regarding Eldad and Meidad.

It is confounding to think that while Yehoshua was standing up for the dignity of his teacher, he compromised the very thing that caused his righteous outrage, the preservation of the dignity of his teacher, Moshe.

Much like the effort needed to create a fine piece of art, Torah observance requires focus and precision. When Torah is practiced with great care and consideration, the result will be a refined and vibrant Torah personality, one that is completely attuned to ensuring that his actions are entirely in line with the Torah.

JOURNEY TO REDEMPTION

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"And He [Hashem] named that place Graves of the Craving, because there they had buried the people who had been craving." (11:34)

According to the Baal Shem Tov, each of the 42 stops along the Jewish people's journey from Egypt to the Land of Israel was an ascending step toward their spiritual redemption.

Furthermore, these 42 stops are allegorically the steppingstones that every Jew must experience during his passage from the constraints of materialism to the apex of holiness.

In this context, the name "the Graves of Craving" refers to the stage in our spiritual growth at which we have completely vanquished and "buried" our improper cravings. Our experience of spirituality is so intense that the possibility for material cravings no longer exists. (Degel Machaneh Ephraim, Masei 80a)

We see here that every stop in the journey of life has the potential to be a positive step in our spiritual development. It is our choice whether or not to actualize this positive spiritual potential. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 4, pp. 1083-1084; Ohr HaTorah, Bamidbar, vol. 4, p. 1352; Sefer HaSichot 5749, vol. 2, p. 528) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

AVOIDING LASHON HARA

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"Miriam and Aharon spoke about Moshe concerning the Cushite woman that he married." (12:1)

Mashal: Once, an itinerant *maggid* (preacher) came to the town of Radin, the hometown of the Chafetz Chaim zt'l. He asked for permission to deliver a sermon on the topic of *lashon hara* (negative speech). The Chafetz Chaim was thrilled and readily approved, even attending the sermon himself. The *maggid* spoke for a full two hours. He drew upon every possible source to impress the evil effects of *lashon hara* upon his listeners. He cajoled the townspeople to better their manners of speech and brought proof after impressive proof to the validity of his words. The Chafetz Chaim listened intently, absorbing the words of the *maggid* and nodding wholeheartedly in agreement.

After the sermon was finished, Rav Yisrael Meir thanked the *maggid* heartily. The *maggid*, however, seemed a bit troubled. He confided to the Chafetz Chaim that he did not have especially good feelings about the lecture, because he had felt little reaction from the audience. It seemed that they hadn't really taken his words to heart. He wondered if he had wasted his time.

"G-d forbid!" exclaimed the Chafetz Chaim, "Do you realize that throughout the two hours that you lectured, no one present in the *beis medrash* spoke one single word of *lashon hara*? Two hours free of *lashon hara* - all on account of your sermon! What a remarkable achievement!"

Nimshal: It is as great a transgression to hear *lashon hara* as it is to speak it, and one should make every attempt to avoid inadvertently overhearing evil words. When the Chafetz Chaim's hearing began to fail, he rejoiced. "Now I have even less of a chance of overhearing gossip, without even needing as great of an effort!" he told people. What would be a disaster to others was a windfall for him! Every moment free of *lashon hara*, he considered a triumph and he would pursue all avenues to distract and delay potential gossipers.

HUMBLE SAVIOR

Reb Noson of Breslov

"And the man Moshe was exceedingly humble..." (12:3)

Moshe was able to record this verse about his greatness yet remain humble, because he negated himself completely to *Ayin*, the Infinite One. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 378)

Moshe reached the epitome of *bitul* (nullification to G-d). The greater one's *bitul* before G-d, the greater his ability to mitigate suffering. Because Moshe was so humble, he was able to put an end to the suffering in Egypt and mitigate the decrees against the Jews in the desert. (ibid., I, p. 54)

Humility is the greatest attribute. (Avodah Zarah 20b)

One who is truly humble and nullifies himself to G-d transcends space, to the level of *Ayin* (Nothingness).

Having attained a level at which he transcends any earthly emotion, such a person can find merit in every single individual. This was Moshe's greatness: he always found the good in people, despite their sins.

Moshe was so humble and so nullified to G-d that he was able to overcome the angels who tried to stop him from taking the Torah down to earth (Shabbos 88b). And he was able to transmit the Torah to all generations, because he transcends every place and time. (See Likutey Halakhot VII, p. 72a)

HUMBLE GREATNESS

Binah L'Ittim

"And the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than anyone on the face of the earth." (12:3)

"And the man Moshe": Moshe was found worthy of being a true "man," a master among men and a "father" of all the prophets that were to come after him, because he "was exceedingly humble, more than anyone on the face of the earth." He regarded all the others as being above him, and therefore he, in fact, was superior to them all.

FLAWLESS HUMILITY

Rebbe Nachman

"And the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than anyone on the face of the earth." (12:3)

One might think that he is humble when he is submissive towards others. However, that might be no more than flattery or servitude. And such false humility is often a form of pride - pride in one's humility. (See Likutey Moharan I, 11:8)

Moshe was the most humble of men. Yet while he recognized his own insignificance, he also recognized the greatness and importance of the Jewish people. (cf. *ibid.*, I, 79)

To attain humility, Moshe had to nullify all of his feelings. How else was it possible for him not to feel even the slightest pride that the Torah repeatedly states: "G-d spoke to Moshe"? Even when Moshe recorded his own praise in the Torah, he was able to nullify any feelings of haughtiness or pride. (See Likutey Moharan I, 4:7)

Humility is the greatest attribute (Avodah Zarah 20b) (Likutey Moharan II, 7:end). And the highest level of humility is to be able to write about oneself that he is humble. (*ibid.*, I, 147)

The essence of Moshe's humility was that despite his stature in the eyes of others and the esteem in which he was held by Heaven, he was able to perceive the greatness of each and every Jew. Therefore, he was able to summon the courage to challenge G-d on behalf of the Jewish people, despite his humility. (See Likutey Moharan I, 79:1)

Though the Jews in the desert had great leaders such as Aharon and Yehoshua - who were prophets in their own right - they had to receive their principal inspiration from Moshe, the *tzaddik*. Moshe's spiritual light was too strong for the Jews. But his level of humility was so great that he could diminish his light in accordance with each recipient's needs. (see Likutey Moharan II, 38)

One who wishes to become wise should face south [during his prayers]; to become wealthy, he should face north. (Bava Basra 25b)

In the Sanctuary, the *Menorah*, which symbolizes wisdom, was placed to the south of the entrance to the Holy of Holies; while the Table, which is associated with wealth, was placed to the north of the entrance. Wealth and wisdom each have their own place. But a humble person can attain both, for he takes up no place at all, and thus is not limited to a specific "place," or state of being. Thus, Moshe was both wise and wealthy. (See Likutey Moharan I, 162)

WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

"And the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than anyone on the face of the earth." (12:3)

What is humility? Firstly, it is important to understand what humility is not! One who says "I am nothing. I cannot do anything. Everything that I have has no worth" is not humble - he is probably depressed! However, if someone says "I am nothing - compared to Hashem. I cannot do anything - without His help. Everything that I have has no worth - compared to what Hashem has" is not undermining his self-worth, he is merely stating his appreciation of Hashem's greatness. Once he is able to contrast his perception of Hashem's greatness with a perception of his own, he will automatically feel humbled.

A humble person fully acknowledges his qualities and achievements; if that is the case, what makes him different to a haughty person? The haughty person sees them as his achievements and his success. However, the humble person sees his triumphs as gifts from Hashem, without which he would never have been able to achieve such success. The reason why he is not comfortable to receive praise is because the praise is only really deserving for the One Who made the venture successful, and that was only Hashem.

The following analogy demonstrates this point beautifully.

There was once a king who owed a debt of gratitude to a poor man. He decided to repay the poor man by making him a governor of one of the provinces of his kingdom. The new governor was exceptionally successful and soon became very popular, the most popular governor of all the king's provinces.

In order to witness the source of his governor's success, the king went to spend a day with him. However, not wanting to draw undue attention, the king dressed as a commoner and the two of them walked around the town together so that the king could see his governor "in action."

The entire day was most embarrassing for the governor, because as he walked around the town he was showered with praise and gratitude by everyone he met, and the whole time, he was standing next to the king who was the real source of all of the good that these people received - yet the governor was receiving all of the praise!

Through this analogy, the Rizhiner Rebbe explained that we are given many abilities and gifts from Hashem. Whether it is our wealth, intellect or family connections that we are praised for, the King is always by our side. How embarrassed should we feel if we take credit for everything we achieve? Therefore, says the Rizhiner Rebbe, whenever we are heaped with praise for actions that come about through one of our "gifts from Hashem," we should remember the real source for this praise and forward it on to the correct address.

HUMBLE AWARENESS

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"And the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than anyone on the face of the earth." (12:3)

Humility is not the result of underestimating one's true worth. Moshe understood very well that he was an extraordinary individual, who had been chosen by G-d to lead the Jewish people out of Egypt and to receive the Torah on their behalf. However, Moshe also thought that had G-d given his lofty traits to someone else, that person would have been able to reach an even higher level than he had attained.

Humility is often misunderstood as simply the lack of boastfulness: We are "humble" if we feel superior to others so long as we don't boast about it! True humility, however, is learned from Moshe. We should be fully aware of whatever greatness we possess, but attribute it to G-d rather than to ourselves.

This allows us to respect other people and see them in a positive light, inasmuch as G-d has blessed them with their own unique qualities. (Sefer HaMa'amarim 5710, p. 236) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

HUMBLED BY OUR GENERATION

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

"And the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than anyone on the face of the earth." (12:3)

All the commentators ask how Moshe regarded himself as lower than us; wasn't Moshe familiar with the verse, "There was never a prophet like Moshe?" He wrote the verse himself! Didn't he know that he was the only person to ever speak Face to face with Hashem?

The Rebbe Rashab (Sefer HaMa'amarim) quotes a Midrash stating that Moshe was shown the *Sefer* of Adam HaRishon, containing a record of all the events of every generation until the coming of Mashiach. Moshe saw that our generation would be filled with darkness and concealment, yet we will continue to strengthen ourselves with faith. After seeing our generation, and the spiritual battle we endure, Moshe Rabbeinu, the greatest prophet to ever live, was humbled by our strength and courage.

Moshe saw the darkness and uncertainty, and yet we hold onto our faith; tragedy after tragedy, yet we stay strong. Seeing this, he felt the utmost sense of humility.

(Similarly, Rabbi Elimelech Biderman teaches that sometimes we begin to compare our deeds to those of previous generations, leaving us with a feeling of inadequacy. But we must remember that our actions are equally treasured and beloved by Hashem. Rabbi Biderman quotes the Arizal who teaches that a simple act preformed in later generations can be as precious to Hashem as the *mitzvos* of the Tannaim.

The Chofetz Chaim reminisced of a time when there was such great wealth in the world that people would not bend down for a copper coin. "But now people are poor, and they pick up copper coins." Although the devotions of earlier generation may seem unparalleled, we must remember that the value of our actions has increased. As Rabbi Biderman teaches, "Today, there is a hunger in heaven. They are waiting for good deeds. And when a *mitzvah* goes up to heaven, no matter how it appears, it is well-received and cherished. And the reward is enormous.")

EXPRESSING DIVINE QUALITIES

Rebbe Nachman

"I speak with him mouth to mouth, in a clear vision and not in riddles, and he gazes at an image of G-d. Why, then, did you not fear to speak against My servant, against Moshe?" (12:8)

G-d's "image" refers to the portrayal of Divine qualities such as "Compassionate," "Kind," and so forth. These qualities were revealed to us by the prophets. *Navi* (נביא, prophet) is related to *Niv sefatayim* (ניב שפתים, movement of the lips) (Yeshayahu 57:19).

When we express the portrayal of G-d's qualities with our lips during prayer, and also clap hands, we fulfill the verse "By the hands of the prophets I am depicted" (Hoshea 12:11). This invokes a level of prophecy that enables us to "gaze at an image of G-d." (See Likutey Moharan I, 212:1)

DIVINE QUALITIES

Imrei Emes

"I speak with him mouth to mouth, in a clear vision and not in riddles, and he gazes at an image of G-d..." (12:8)

Doesn't the Hebrew verb "*habatah*" imply a looking down from somewhere above? (See Rashi's commentary on Bereishis 15:5)

"The image of Hashem" that Moshe saw refers not to a likeness of G-d but to His Divine qualities of graciousness and mercy - qualities that Moshe brought with him from above, down to earth and into the hearts of the Jewish people.

LEVELS OF COMPASSION

Rebbe Nachman

"Moshe cried out to G-d, saying, 'Please, G-d, heal her, please!'" (12:13)

Broadly speaking, there are two degrees of Divine compassion: Simple Compassion, which is rooted in the spiritual level called *Ze'er Anpin*, and Abundant Compassion, which is rooted in the higher spiritual level called *Atik* (Zohar III, 137b). Due to our many sins, we cannot be helped fully by G-d's Simple Compassion, but require His Abundant Compassion. However, the latter is much more difficult to access.

These two levels may be compared to two rich men who lived in a city. One was a moderately wealthy man, while the other was a fabulously wealthy magnate. Once, another resident of that city found himself in dire financial straits. He was able to get an audience with the moderately wealthy individual, but it was impossible for him to gain entry to the enormously wealthy man. However, the moderately wealthy individual did not have the means to fulfill the man's request. What could he do now? Someone advised the man to go back to the moderately wealthy individual and appeal to his compassion: "Look, I need a great deliverance, and I know that you want to show me compassion. But since it is not within your power to fulfill my request, please go to the very wealthy man and elicit compassion from him on my behalf."

So too, a person should pray for G-d's Simple Compassion to ascend to the level of His Abundant Compassion in order to fulfill our requests. And the way to arouse that Simple Compassion is to engage in Torah study, since Torah study gives a person proper *da'at* (awareness of G-d), and whoever possesses such *da'at* can elicit Abundant Compassion. (See Likutey Moharan I, 105:3)

NOT WITHOUT MIRIAM

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"So Miriam was confined outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not travel until Miriam was brought in." (12:15)

The message in this verse is that without "Miriam," without the Jewish woman, we cannot proceed on our journey toward our destiny. All the Moshe's and Aharon's in the world cannot replace Miriam.

G-d wants women to realize their G-d-given talents, and the uniqueness and essentialness of their role in bringing the world to its ultimate fulfillment. He asks them to take an active role in all aspects of life, especially the education of the next generation, the means by which we will proceed further toward our destined goal. Without Miriam, neither the people nor the "Tabernacle" - the entire spiritual structure of society - can proceed. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 8, p. 288) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

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