

Parashat BeHa'aloscha

Parsha Summary

God tells Moshe to teach Aharon about lighting the *menorah*'s candles, and then teaches him how to purify the Leviim to dedicate them to God as Israel's messengers and replacements for the firstborn sons.

In the first month of the second year, Israel offered the Pesach sacrifice in the desert. There were people who complained to Moshe that they could not bring the sacrifice because they were impure, and so God told Moshe that anyone who was impure on the 14th of the month can bring a Pesach sacrifice on the 14th of the second month instead.

The camps of Israel would always follow the fiery cloud over the Mishkan; when it would travel the tribes would follow, and when it would rest upon the Mishkan they would encamp. God told Moshe to make golden trumpets to announce the traveling according to the cloud's ascents and to arrange for each section of the tribes to travel in turn. The trumpets were also sounded to gather the leaders as well as over celebratory sacrifices on the holidays. In the second month of the second year, the cloud rose - Moshe sounded the trumpets to have each tribe-group travel one after the other and they went from Sinai to Paran. Moshe told his father-in-law Chovav to travel with them, but he turned to go back home. Israel traveled three days from Sinai with the Aron in front; when it would travel Moshe would announce "arise, God, and your enemies will scatter"

The nation complained and God's anger caused a fire to burn them until Moshe cried out to God; that place was called "*tav'eirah*". The additional members of the nation became desirous and caused a national complaint about their lack of meat and other foods--except for the mann--in the desert. Moshe cried out to God that he cannot handle the nation. God responded that He will give prophecy to 70 elders of the nation to share Moshe's burden, and that the people will be fed a revolting amount of quail for a month. The elders were gathered and two additional people who remained in the camp, Eldad and Meidad, also began prophesying. Yehoshua thought to censure them but Moshe considered this to be positive. God sent the quail, and when the people gathered lustily God was angry and many people died; the place was thus named '*kivros ha-ta'avah*'.

Miriam spoke to Aharon regarding the Kushite woman who Moshe married. God reprimanded them for speaking about Moshe, who was the most faithful and true prophet. Miriam was punished with *tzara'at* and had to remain outside the camp but Moshe prayed for her recovery.

Classic Questions

How is this case of God granting meat to the nation different from the story in Shemos 16:12?

- **Rashi:** [at this point] they really already had meat, and were just looking to complain
- **Ramban 1:** originally, the people never had enough quail to satisfy everyone (so it was either only eaten by the elders of the nation, or it was eaten in small quantities)
- **Ramban 2:** the quail was not given constantly like the mann
- **Chizkuni:** the occasion of the quail in Shemos was only a one-time occurrence
- **R. Yosef Bechor Shor:** this is actually the same story which is referenced earlier

What was the 'slander' that Miriam spoke (and why was she punished)?

- **Targum, Rashi:** Miriam criticized Moshe for separating from his wife, saying that she and Aharon were also prophets but did not separate from their spouses
 - **Rav Kook** (*Olas R'ayah*): the primary sin was not recognizing how Moshe's prophecy was totally unique, a principle of faith and foundation of the Torah
- **Rashbam:** they were speaking of another wife (besides Tzipporah), who Moshe married while he was a king in the land of Kush, as stated in some traditions
 - **R. Yosef Bechor Shor:** they were opposed to Moshe marrying someone who was not a member of Bnei Yisrael
 - **Ibn Caspi:** perhaps Moshe took a second wife in addition to Tzipporah

Important "Chazal"s and "Rashi"s

- Here Leviim serve 'from 25 years [of age]' but elsewhere (Bamidbar 4:3) it says thirty, because it took five years to study before serving at age 30 (Rashi)
- Who were the impure people who were defiled by dead bodies? R. Akiva says, they were Mishael and Eltzaphan who buried Nadav and Avihu, R. Yitzchak says they were busy with carrying Yosef's coffin. [Gemara:] they suddenly had to take care of the dead exactly seven days before Pesach. (Sukkah 25b)
- They traveled from Sinai, like a child fleeing from school (Shabbos 116a)
- *Va-yehi bi-nsoa' ha-aron* (10:35) has "signs" before and after to show that this paragraph is out of place. Rebbe says, to show that it is its own book by itself (Shabbos 115b)

A Short Vort

R. Soloveitchik on the story of the parsha:

The Parasha is one story, one tragic story. Expectancy permeates the pages of 'ha'alot'kha; there is a mood of mobilization and rigid order in the air. All conditions were met, the reward is about to be granted, finally the promise to Abraham is about to be fulfilled. The people are on their final triumphal march. The whole operation, if successfully brought to a close, would have lasted a mere several days. And at that time there was no need for Meraglim, for scouts to explore the land, to see whether the land is good or bad, or to see whether the cities are surrounded by walls or they are open cities, what kind of population is there - strong, weak, a sickly population or a healthy population. There was no need for it, all those scouts and all the exploration and intelligence work is only necessary if a man has doubts. This was the pre-doubt period in Jewish history. Suddenly, something happened. They were mad with desire, there was no controlling/limiting element in their desire for vastness, the imagination excited them and their good sense was surrounded with a nimbus which was irresistible, "the more, the better, and you start gathering new goods even before you have completed gathering the other goods." The pagan is impatient and insatiable. The great tragedy happened, the great triumphal final march suddenly came to a stop, the people who rejected the basic principle of economic limitedness and aesthetic enjoyment, these people were not worthy to enter the Land. And then parashat *Vay'hi binsoa' ha'aron* lost its place - it was dislocated and displaced. Two little *Nuns* were inverted - the march was inverted. Instead of the march bringing them closer to Eretz Yisrael, the march took them away from Eretz Yisrael