

Torah Weekly

June 7-13, 2020
15-21 Sivan, 5780

Torah: Behaalotecha:
Numbers 8:1 - 12:16
Haftarah: Zacharia 2:14 - 4:7

PARSHAT
BEHAALOTECHA

Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

Hyman & Martha Rogal Center
5804 Beacon Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15217
412-421-0111
Fax: 412-521-5948
www.alephne.org
info@alephne.org



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No One Alone,
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Truly Humble The In the Torah Moses is described as "exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3). The story is told of a certain individual who considered himself extremely humble. In fact, he was so humble that nobody knew how great he was. Even his own wife was unaware of his greatness, such was his humility. Now this person had a problem with the verse in the Torah about Moses. How could G-d, who presumably can see ahead into all the future generations, fail to be aware that there would be an individual in a future generation who would be even more humble than Moses? After all, everyone knew of Moses' greatness, yet our friend kept his greatness concealed from all. This posed a theological dilemma for him, until he came up with the following answer. When the Torah spoke of Moses as being humble, it could have simply said "exceedingly humble, more than any person." Why add the seemingly superfluous "on the face of the earth"? Very simple. On the face of the earth implies that something is revealed, that people are aware of it. Our friend was so humble, he reasoned to himself, that his greatness was concealed beneath the face of the earth. With this logic, he was able to bask in his great humility and resolve this theological problem. False humility, as seen in the above story, is a big problem. It is a trap which it is all too easy to fall into, especially when we find ourselves in a position of leadership, of "greatness." It remains reasonable, nonetheless, to ask the question, how could Moses be so humble when he was such a great leader? The answer is that

Moses knew where his greatness was coming from. He understood that all his talents were G-d-given gifts and that another person, blessed with the same talents, might even do a better job. Elsewhere in the Parshah, we are told about Eldad and Medad, who were going around the camp of the Israelites, prophesying without express permission to do so. Joshua tells Moses, "Moses, my master, make an end of them." Rashi explains that this means "place the responsibility upon them for the needs of the community and they will end up destroying themselves." Power corrupts, if not used carefully. It is hard to find the balance between the need for hierarchy and for one person to have power over another, and an appropriate degree of humility. When we realize that any talents, any gifts, any "power" we find ourselves with is a gift from Above, to be used for good and not abused, then we are less susceptible to the corruption that can come with power. May we all merit to use our G-d-given talents for good purposes, not to be falsely humble, but to genuinely realize where our abilities come from and at the same time to utilize them to the fullest. When we appreciate where our talents really come from, we can be truly humble and respectful of others, even when we find ourselves in positions of leadership. *By Rabbi Mordechai Wollenberg*

Why Moses Needed the Elders

As the Jewish people leave Mount Sinai, after camping at the mountain for just short of a year, the trouble begins. They have everything they need, they are protected from the elements by the clouds of glory, they

drink water from the miraculous well, and they eat the mysterious "food from the heavens," the manna. And yet, they begin to complain. As the Torah relates: But the multitude among them began to have strong cravings. Then even the children of Israel once again began to cry, and they said, "Who will feed us meat? We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge, the cucumbers, the watermelons, the leeks, the onions and the garlic. But now, our bodies are dried out, for there is nothing at all; we have nothing but manna to look at." (Numbers 11:4-6) Moses, the most patient and devoted leader, who stood by the people through thick and thin, who did not abandon them even when they committed the cardinal sin of serving the golden calf, throws his hands up in frustration: Moses said to the L-rd, "Why have You treated Your servant so badly? Why have I not found favor in Your eyes, that You place the burden of this entire people upon me? Did I conceive this entire people? Did I give birth to them, that You say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom as the nurse carries the suckling,' to the Land You promised their forefathers? Where can I get meat to give all these people? For they are crying on me, saying, 'Give us meat to eat.' Alone I cannot carry this entire people, for it is too hard for me. If this is the way You treat me, please kill me, if I have found favor in Your eyes, so that I not see my misfortune." (Numbers 11:11-15) And G-d listens. When Moses initially resisted assuming the leadership of the Jewish people, G-d spent

Sunday, June 7, 2020 --- 15 Sivan, 5780

Birth and Passing of Judah (1565 and 1446 BCE)

Judah, the fourth son of Jacob and Leah, was born in Charan on the 15th of Sivan, of the year 2196 from creation (1565 BCE). He passed away on the same date 119 years later, in Egypt. Judah took the leadership role both in selling Joseph into slavery and in the brothers' later attempts to find him and free him, and to protect Benjamin. On his deathbed, Jacob conferred the leadership of Israel upon Judah, proclaiming: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the legislator from between his feet, until Shiloh (the Moshiach) comes..." The royal house of David, as well as many of the great sages and leaders of Israel throughout the generations of Jewish history, trace their lineage to Judah. Judah had five sons: Er and Onan, who died without children; Shelah; and his twins from Tamar, Peretz and Zerach. Their descendants formed the Tribe of Judah, the most populous and prestigious of the twelve tribes of Israel. After the death of King Solomon in 797 BCE, the people of Israel split into two kingdoms: ten tribes formed the Kingdom of Israel in the north, with Shomron (Samaria) as the capital; only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to Solomon's son, Rechavam, and formed the Kingdom of Judea in the south, in the areas surrounding the capitol Jerusalem. Eventually, the Northern Kingdom was conquered by Assyria and the ten tribes living there were exiled and lost to the Jewish people; the inhabitants of Judea were also exiled (to Babylonia) but subsequently returned to the Holy Land and rebuilt Jerusalem and the Holy Temple. Over time, the terms "Judean" and "Jew"--which originally referred to a member of the tribe of Judah--became synonymous with "Israelite" and was used to refer to the descendants of all of Jacob's twelve sons--i.e., the Jewish people.

6th Lubavitcher Rebbe arrested (1927)

Shortly after midnight of the 15th of Sivan of 1927, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (1880-1950), was arrested by agents of the GPU (Soviet Secret Police) and Yevsketzia ("Jewish section" of the Communist Party) for leading the underground network of rabbis, teachers and emissaries working to preserve and disseminate Jewish learning and observance throughout the Soviet Empire.

Monday, June 8, 2020 --- 16 Sivan, 5780

Passing of Rebbetzin Freida (1813)

Rebbetzin Freida was the daughter of the Alter Rebbe, R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi. She was especially dear to her illustrious father, and he would frequently deliver chassidic discourses specifically for her. In fact, when her brother R. DovBer, who later became the Mittlerer Rebbe, wanted to hear Chassidut, he would sometimes ask her to make a request, whereupon he would hide and listen. Rebbetzin Freida passed away a few months after her father, and was interred in Haditch, Ukraine, immediately adjacent to R. Schneur Zalman.

Tuesday, June 9, 2020 --- 17 Sivan, 5780

Noah's Ark on Mt. Ararat (2105 BCE)

Seven months after the beginning of the Great Flood, and 17 days after the waters covering the earth began to subside, the Ark sheltering Noah, his family, and members of all animal species came to rest on the (still submerged) summit of Mount Ararat.

Thursday, June 11, 2020 --- 19 Sivan, 5780

Passing of R. Yehuda ibn Attar (1733)

R. Yehuda ibn Attar (1655-1733), who served as rabbi in Fez, is regarded as one of the greatest leaders among Moroccan Jewry. A saintly and pious man, he was known as a miracle worker and was revered by the local Jews and Muslims alike. He refused to accept a salary from the community, working as a goldsmith instead. It is related that he was once thrown into a lion's den and miraculously survived unharmed (*Shem Hagedolim*). This protagonist of this story is often said to be—apparently in error—R. Yehuda's kinsman,

seven days cajoling him to accept. And here, without the slightest word of protest, G-d accepts Moses' claim that he is incapable of leading the nation all alone: Then the L-rd said to Moses, "Assemble for Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the people's elders and officers, and you shall take them to the Tent of Meeting, and they shall stand there with You. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will increase the spirit that is upon you and bestow it upon them. Then they will bear the burden of the people with you so that you need not bear it alone." (Numbers 11:16-17) Granted, asking for meat is not the most spiritual exercise, but what is it about the request that so offends Moses? And if Moses, the model leader, can no longer lead such a difficult people, then what secret do the seventy elders possess that will allow them to succeed where Moses apparently failed? The people are not asking for meat. They have plenty of cattle. The meat is an excuse to complain. They resent the moral and religious restrictions the Torah places on their personal life. They long for Egypt where, though slaves to Pharaoh, they could go home and be free from moral restrictions. As Rashi explains: "*Which we ate in Egypt free of charge*": If you say that the Egyptians gave them fish free of charge, does it not already say, "Straw shall not be given to you"? (Exodus 5:18) Now if straw was not given free of charge, was fish given to them free of charge? So what does "free of charge" mean? Free from [the burden of the] divine commandments. (Rashi, Numbers 11:5) Moses, who has spent every moment of the past year studying and teaching Torah to the Jews, sees this complaint for what it is: a rejection of everything he stands for. Moses is trying to elevate his beloved people to a higher plane. To refine their character. To place them on a spiritual path. Yet all they see are restrictions. Moses is dejected. He feels that there is an unbridgeable gap between himself and the people. He turns to G-d and cries: "Did I conceive this entire people? Did I give birth to them?" What he is saying is that, despite everything he has done, the people don't view him as a loving parent who has their best interests in mind. They see him as an old man trying to impose his way of life. They see him as standing in the way of the lifestyle they want to live. G-d understands. G-d understands that the people failed. They failed to appreciate the greatness of Moses. They failed to acknowledge his great love and sacrifice for them. There is, however, no point in pushing Moses to lead alone, as he cannot be effective unless the people see him for who he is: someone who cares for them like a mother cares for the child she conceived and gave birth to. At this point, G-d tells Moses to find seventy leaders, but not just any seventy. This is not about appointing people to help Moses; this is about selecting leaders whom the people trust. Leaders whom the people know would sacrifice anything for their wellbeing, as a mother would for her children. These elders have a track record. These are seventy people who suffered terribly to protect the Jews back in Egypt. As Rashi explains: "*Whom you know to be . . .*": Those whom you know that they were appointed as officers over them in Egypt [to oversee] the rigorous labor, and they had mercy on them and were beaten on their account, as it says, "The officers of the children of Israel were beaten." (Exodus 5:14) Now they shall be chosen in their greatness, just as they had suffered in their [Israel's] distress. (Rashi, Numbers 11:16) The seventy elders have no power that Moses does not possess. In fact, their leadership comes from "the spirit that is upon you [Moses]." (Numbers 11:17) Moses is the source of the inspiration, but if the people don't see him as a mother, then they need the elders, whom they trust, to lead them toward the teachings of Moses. The Torah is giving us a message: if you want to have any chance at influencing people, make sure that they have no doubt that you care deeply for them. As the saying goes: people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Source: Based on Mishpetei Torah, by Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Shpitz, on Parshat Behaalotecha. *By Rabbi Menachem Feldman*