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Yeshiva University Torah miTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Behaalotcha

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A Grown-Up View of G-d?

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

We may observe that each of the Torah's chumashim presents a transition for the Jewish nation:

- In Bereishit we evolve into a clan.
- In Shemot we experience slavery, redemption and revelation en route to becoming G-d-centered, with an ideology and a mission.
- In Vayikra we develop spiritually, learning the mechanics and meanings of sanctity and purity.
- In Bamidbar we again evolve, from the fresh-faced recipients of the Torah at Sinai to an older, perhaps sadder nation on the cusp of entering the Land of Israel.
- In Devarim we lose Moshe, and the nation of *masorah* [received tradition] takes the place of the nation of direct personal experience.

The above observation runs into a snag, though, in a talmudic reflection (Shabbat 116a) on our parshah. Noting the odd insignia which demarcate the beginning of Bamidbar 10:35 and the end of Bamidbar 10:36 in the Torah, Rabbi Yehudah haNasi contends that Bamidbar 10:35 and 36, constitute a chumash in themselves. [Of course, viewing Bamidbar 10:35-36 as an independent book should render the word *chumash*, meant to connote one of the Torah's five books, obsolete; there would now be seven chumashim! However, we will continue to use the term *chumash* in this article, rather than coin a new term.] But if this small section is a chumash, then what transition takes place therein?

The verses themselves do not seem to contain any action, or any lessons for Jewish practice: "And it was, when the Ark travelled, that Moshe said: Arise,

G-d, and Your enemies will be scattered, and those who hate You will flee before You. And when it rested, he would say: Settle, G-d, among the myriads of thousands of Israel." How do the Jewish people change in the course of these two verses?

Perhaps an answer lies not in action or halachah, but in the depiction of G-d offered here. Until now, the "bad guys" of the Torah fought with us; as their stories are spelled out in the Torah, the Egyptians and the Amalekites were concerned primarily with the Jews, and with G-d only second, if at all. Here, for the first time in Jewish history, G-d is presented as having enemies, and the Jews are eager for their defeat.

In the early emotional life of a child, a parent lacks any personality or identity beyond that of protector and nurturer. The narrative of a parent's existence, his life before the child was born, her ambitions and social interactions, are of no relevance for the child. At some stage, though, the child becomes aware of the parent's broader identity, and of the role that the child plays on that fuller stage. This, perhaps, is the metamorphosis that takes place in Bamidbar 10:35-36 – we learn of our Parent's existence beyond His actions of feeding, clothing, teaching and protecting us. We learn of G-d's relationship with the broader world.

Much of our Judaism is applicable only once we undergo this metamorphosis, recognizing the importance of spreading awareness of G-d and of our own responsibility to execute that mission. The concepts of *kiddush HaShem* and its opposite, *chillul HaShem*, are about more than sanctifying the Divine Name in our own midst (Vayikra 22:32); they are also about how G-d is viewed in the

greater world. (Yechezkel 38:23) The imperative, "Cause the Name of G-d to be beloved through your actions," is linked by the Talmud (Yoma 86a) to a verse in Devarim (6:5), after this book, and not in Shemot or Vayikra. And so it is that in Shemot we are told that G-d will personally wipe out the name of Amalek (Shemot 17:14), but in Devarim we are told that it is also our own mission to wipe out the name of Amalek. (Devarim 25:19)

Unfortunately, our transition did not go smoothly; in the very next biblical chapter we displayed conduct as selfish as any in the preceding chapters of our history, complaining of the faintest privation and driving Moshe to desperation. We were not yet ready, and the path to maturity was long and winding, but there were flashes of brilliance along the route, such as Yehoshua and Kalev standing up to slander, Pinchas standing up to immorality, and Devorah standing up to national cowardice.

We are not yet at the end of this path; we have not yet reached the stage at which all of us, all the time, ask, "What can I do to promote G-d now?" This is not a matter of evangelism, but of actions which, by dint of their visible loyalty to Divine command, challenge the foes identified in Bamidbar 10:35.

We would do well to learn the lessons of this chumash, to stop seeing G-d as exclusively personal and instead comprehend the greater picture, a universe in which we are active participants in promoting Truth. When we do, we will also merit the second half of this chumash, Bamidbar 10:36, and G-d will settle among the myriads of thousands of Israel.

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בינו יונה מביא גם מדרש נפלא (ילקוט שמעוני משלי רמז תתקסד) בו מסבירה בת שבע לשלמה כי: "ומה בר נדרי - כל נשים של בית אביך היו נודרות ואומרות יהא לי בן הגון וראוי למלכות, ואני נדרתי ואמרת יהא לי בן מלובן ומזוקק והגון לנביאות". כלומר תפילת ההורים על ילדיהם, והעתיד אותו הם מייעדים להם, נהפכים לחלק משמעותי מתפילת הילדים.

לכן נראה להגיד, כי בוודאי יש ענין גדול להגיד בכל יום את התפילה להצלחת הילדים, ולמרות שיום מיוחד מסוגל לזה יותר בוודאי לא צריך ל"שמור" את התפילה ליום מסויים ואגב כך להימנע מלאומרה בכל השנה.

ידוע ומפורסם הסיפור אשר מסופר בין השאר על האדמו"ר מויז'ניץ. מסופר שבא אליו אחד הרבנים ושאל אותו כיצד זכה לבנים תלמידי חכמים (שבניו היו תלמידי חכמים גדולים ומוכרים, בין ספריהם: "מקור ברוך", "אמרי חיים", "דמשק אליעזר", "שארית מנחם"). ענה לו הרב ואמר, מה אתם חושבים, מתי מתחילה מצוות חינוך? בגיל תשע! בגיל שלוש! בן שנה! אולי כשנולד הילד? - לא! החינוך מתחיל שנים רבות קודם לכן... עת ששפכנו שיח ותפילה עבורם שיצמחו בעבודת הבורא.

נמצנו למדים שגם תפילות אשר עניינם ביום מסוים בוודאי לא בטלות בשאר הימים, במיוחד כאשר מדובר בתפילה משמעותית כל כך של הורים על ילדיהם, ומבטוחו שתהיה זו סגולה גדולה לאומרה בכל יום ויום בכוונה גדולה.

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ידועה ומפורסמת היא תפילת השל"ה הקדוש (ר' ישעיהו הלוי הורוויץ) אשר נהגו לאומרה בערב ראש חודש סיון. תפילה זו עניינה תפילת ההורים על ילדיהם שיגדלו בתורה וביראת שמים. אם כן, ישאל הקורא, מדוע לא פרסמנו מאמר זה בערב ראש חודש סיון! אך זוהי בדיוק הנקודה שברצוננו להבהיר.

וזהו המקור בדברי השל"ה הקדוש, מסכת תמיד-נר מצוה אות קל"ב: "וביותר צריך זירוז להתפלל שיהיה לו זרע כשר עד עולם... ולבי אומר, שעת רצון לתפילה זו בערב ראש חודש סיון, הוא החודש שבו נתנה התורה... כלומר השל"ה מציג את התפילה ומודיע כי עת רצון מיוחדת לתפילה זו היא בערב ראש חודש סיון. השל"ה מסביר כי חודש סיון הוא החודש בו ניתנה תורה לעם ישראל, ממילא בחודש זה יש מסוגלות גבוהה יותר לקבלת התורה. כפי שאנו מתברכים בראש השנה בשפע גשמי, כך מתברך האדם בשבועות בשפע תורני, לכן כדאי ביותר בפתחו של החודש, בערב ראש חודש, להתפלל על ילדנו שיגדלו בתורה.

אולם רחוק הדבר להגיד שתפילה זו שייכת רק ביום זה, וכך כותב השל"ה בשער האותיות דל"ת-דרך ארץ: "**ותמיד** תהיה תפלה שגורה בפי אב ואם, להתפלל על זרעם, שיהיו לומדי תורה, וצדיקים, ובעלי מדות טובות..." וכן מצינו ברבינו יונה (אגרת התשובה יום ז', כלל א') שכל שבת בהדלקת הנרות יתפללו על הצלחת ילדיהם, וכן כתב המשנה ברורה (מז: ה): "**ותמיד** תהיה תפלת האב והאם שגורה בפיהם להתפלל על בניהם שיהיו לומדי תורה וצדיקים ובעלי מדות טובות ויכוין מאוד בברכת אהבה רבה ובברכת התורה בשעה שאומרים ונהיה אנחנו וצאצאנו וכן כשאומר בובא לציון למען לא ניגע לריק ולא נלד לבהלה:"

The question asked of Moshe by those who were impure (Bamidbar 9:6-7) was fundamentally different from the questions Moshe was normally asked. Usually, Moshe was asked for knowledge regarding the Divine Will: how to punish a sinner, or how to decide a difficult case.

The request from the impure people was on a different plane. They knew very well that they could not sacrifice the Korban Pesach with the rest of the nation, due to factors beyond their control. Therefore, they were exempt. However, they wished to open a door, to pave a new way, to be granted the possibility of participating in the offering.

Rashi (Bamidbar 9:7) cites a midrash which notes that the commandment of Pesach Sheni should have been presented by Moshe, like the rest of the Torah. This lesson was revealed only after the people requested it, in order to bring merit to those who deserved it. One might ask, though: why was this request, specifically, honoured with the opportunity to reveal a mitzvah?

Perhaps Pesach Sheni can teach us a lesson about transcending halachah when one is prevented from fulfilling a mitzvah. The basic rule is that the one who was prevented from fulfilling a mitzvah due to circumstances beyond his control is exempt from any punishment. However, this group of impure people was not interested in being exempt. They wanted to serve their G-d. Before their eyes stood only one question: why should we do less than our brothers to display our commitment to Hashem? (Bamidbar 9:7) Not fear of punishment, or desire for reward, but pure love was their prime motivation.

Pesach Sheni teaches us that G-d is willing to give us a second chance. Further, it teaches us that a second chance is available not only for someone who has sinned, but even for someone who has missed an opportunity to accomplish something good - as long as we aspire for this good with all of our being.

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613 Mitzvot: #262 Dare to be Different Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Many of the Torah's mitzvot are geared toward building a strong Jewish identity, and aiding us to stay far from idolatry. Mitzvah 262 fits that pattern, warning Jews to stay away from *chukot akum*, practices of the other nations. (Sifri Devarim 81; Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 178:1)

This law prohibits imitating the other nations for the sake of resembling them. When people conduct themselves in a certain way for practical benefit - such as they cut paper with a scissor or they eat with a knife and fork - there is no

prohibition against Jews adopting that practice. Some authorities even permit practices which were associated historically with idolatry, so long as they are also performed for practical reasons, and the Jew who performs them only intends the practical function. This is the view of Ran to Avodah Zarah 11a, against the view of Tosafot; see Biur haGra Yoreh Deah 178:7 as well.

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**Torah in Translation
A Mourner at a
Mitzvah Meal?**

R' Yechiel Michel Epstein

**Aruch haShulchan Yoreh Deah 391:4-5
Translated by Adam Frieberg**

We have already quoted the language of *Masechet S'machot*, which states that [a mourner] may attend a meal which is for the sake of heaven. The Jerusalem Talmud states that if the gathering is for a mitzvah or to sanctify the month then he may attend. The simple meaning of these statements is that they were referring to a mourner who is within the thirty days of mourning for relatives other than parents, or a mourner who is within the twelve months of mourning for a parent, but any meal would be forbidden for a mourner within thirty days of the passing of a parent. All of this can be seen within the Raavad, cited in the Tur.

They challenged this, first because according to these sources, meals surrounding mitzvot have greater allowance [for mourners to attend] than do meals that are halachically optional. The difficulty with this lies in the fact that our Talmud leaves us with the opposite impression, that there is greater room for leniency in allowing mourners to attend social meals, which are definitely halachically optional meals!

The Rosh answered this question in the name of the Ra'avad: "The permission [for a mourner to attend a meal that was made] for the sake of heaven was in reference to [making a wedding] for orphans or paupers, in a situation where the mourner's absence would prevent the event from occurring. However, when a mourner is invited to the wedding of a wealthy person, for his own honour, the mourner may not enter. When the Jerusalem Talmud stated that where the gathering is for a mitzvah or to sanctify the month it is permissible, that meant a mitzvah meal such as eating the Korban Pesach or eating other sacrifices or secondary tithes, or other events that require this person specifically. [He may attend] despite the fact that these occur in a group, and there is feasting and joy. And even in these cases, they permitted a mourner to attend only after thirty days of mourning for a parent."

According to him, a mitzvah meal is more forbidden than an optional meal, because there is joy in the mitzvah. They permitted attending a meal for a mitzvah only for one of the following two cases: A marriage of orphans where he is involved in marrying them off and the marriage would be cancelled

Rabbi Yechiel Michel HaLevi Epstein was born in 1829 to a family of wealthy army contractors who serviced the Czar's army, in Belarus. He married the sister of Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, the Netziv.

Rabbi Epstein was the rav of Novozypkov and then Novardok, from 1854 until his passing. He was well-respected by both chasidim and mitnagdim, and figures as diverse as Rav Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor, Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin and the Tzchernobyler Rebbe wrote *haskamot* (letters of approbation) for his works.

Rabbi Epstein wrote prolifically; his writings include *derashot*, commentary to Talmud Yerushalmi, commentary to the Haggadah, *teshuvot* and his most famous work, the Aruch haShulchan.

In the Aruch haShulchan, Rabbi Epstein reverse-engineered the Shulchan Aruch, tracing each halachah back to its earliest sources. Three small manuscript sections are missing, but it covers the entire breadth of the Shulchan Aruch. In addition, his Aruch haShulchan he'Atid dealt with laws for the time of the Beit haMikdash.

Rabbi Epstein dealt with meta-halachic topics, such as the role of Kabbalah in the development of Jewish law, in his writings. He also addressed the issues of a new age: matters of evolving community structures, new technologies, the strife between Mussar and anti-Mussar advocates and the tension between Zionists and anti-Zionists.

Rabbi Epstein passed away in 1908, but his legacy looms large; his Aruch haShulchan is a fundamental text for studying halachah. Also, his son, Rabbi Baruch haLevi Epstein, authored several popular works, including the Baruch sheAmar (on the siddur) and the Torah Temimah.

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without him – and it appears to me that this not literal cancellation, but that the groom and bride would be pained by his absence – or a mitzvah in which he is personally obligated, like the Korban Pesach or other sacrifices, which are not relevant these days. According to this, such a mourner may not attend a circumcision or pidyon haben, for every mitzvah meal is joyous.

**This Week in
Israeli History
18 Sivan 1946
Operation Markolet
Rabbi Ezra Goldschmiedt**

18 Sivan is Monday

Operation Markolet (also known as *leil hagesharim*, the night of the bridges) was the Haganah's last and largest operation against Arabs and the ruling British forces. The mission's goal was to destroy eleven bridges linking Israel to surrounding countries – Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt. Facing increasing threats from the Arab population, the Haganah took these steps to disrupt their enemies' transportation and to discourage Arab armies from involvement in the conflict.

Months in advance, Haganah intelligence agents surveyed their targets. Masquerading as tourists and nature observers, they photographed and examined the bridges, determining how they would attack and make their escape. When the night of the operation came, the Haganah also organized a large number of smaller operations to confuse British forces and divert attention from their primary mission.

The mission was, for the most part, accomplished. Nine of the bridges were successfully laid with explosives and destroyed. The two bridges of Nahal Akhziv in Lebanon remained, because the Haganah forces there were discovered; the group suffered fourteen casualties and five injuries.

The mission's impact was felt quickly. In addition to stemming the influence of surrounding Arab countries in the conflict, the Haganah's actions dealt a heavy blow to the ruling British forces. The destruction cost the British financially, and severely damaged their reputation as a powerful and controlling force in the region. To restore some sense of control, the British responded heavily a few days later, with curfews and extensive police and military operations in Jewish neighborhoods. Known as *Shabbat HaShechorah* (Black Shabbat), British forces arrested some 2,700 members of Jewish forces, including Haganah leaders, and discovered many arms caches. From that point on, the Haganah began to minimize their anti-British operations, but Operation Markolet was still seen largely as a success.

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Who is the prophet of our haftorah?

Zechariah ("G-d has remembered") was a popular name in the generation that returned to Israel to build the second Beit haMikdash. Our prophet, Zechariah, lived in that first generation, and taught the nation alongside another prophet, Chaggai. Some suggest that he was a kohen, based on Nechemyah 12:16.

Zechariah's audience was the group of Jews who returned from Bavel. A small population, indigent and unlearned, they were discouraged by the difficulties of building the Beit haMikdash and establishing their community. Zechariah exhorted the kohanim and political leaders to work in tandem for the national good. Much of his early message is presented through dramatic visions of horses, flying women, and angels; some take his unusual and opaque visions as an indication that his prophecy was on a lower level than that of earlier prophets (Ibn Ezra to Zechariah 1:1; Moreh haNevuchim 2:44; Radak to Zechariah 5:3). Others argue that these visions were a function of the depth and distance of the future he was perceiving. (Abarbanel)

At the end of his book, Zechariah predicts a great battle, Mashiach's arrival, and an expanded Jerusalem.

The message of our haftorah

Our haftorah begins with the pledge that G-d will return to live among the Jews, and that the nations will join us as well. (2:14-16) The passage continues with a vision of Yehoshua, the Kohen Gadol, wearing dirty clothes, facing an angel and a being identified as a "satan". G-d orders the dirty clothing replaced with clean clothing. (3:1-5)

Commentators differ in explaining this:

- According to Rashi, Yehoshua is on trial for the guilt of his children, who intermarried; his dirty clothing proclaims their sin. The "satan" prosecutes; G-d supports Yehoshua. The clothing is replaced because Yehoshua's children ultimately separate from their non-Jewish wives. (Ezra 10)
- According to Ibn Ezra and Radak, Yehoshua represents the Jews who are building the Beit haMikdash, and the dirty clothes represent their poverty. The "satan" represents earthly forces attempting to prevent the construction; G-d enables the builders to succeed. The new, clean clothing represents the end of that generation's poverty.
- Per Abarbanel, Yehoshua represents his descendants, the Chashmonaim, who are guilty of taking the throne inappropriately; kohanim are not supposed to rule as kings. Their clothing is dirty because they wear royal garb inappropriately. The "satan"

accuses them of guilt, and G-d defends them for their righteousness in battling Hellenization. They are given clean clothing when their monarchy ends.

Toward the end of the haftorah (4:1-7), Zechariah envisions a menorah; this menorah is the simplest reason for us to read this haftorah for Parshat Behaalotcha, which begins with the mitzvah of lighting the menorah in the Mishkan. Unlike the menorah in the Beit haMikdash, though, this menorah receives its oil via channels which stem from two olive trees. Commentators differ in their understanding of how many channels led to the branches; Ibn Ezra saw 7, Abarbanel understood there to be 14, and Rashi calculated 49.

Zechariah asks what the menorah represents, but our haftorah ends before he receives an answer. Later on, an angel explains the vision of the menorah (4:11-14). Commentators disagree regarding the meaning of the explanation, but Rashi, Ibn Ezra and Abarbanel agree that the two olive trees, and their associated channels, represent the separate roles of priestly authority and political authority. The vision of the two trees fueling the menorah conveys that in the future there will be peace between these two branches of government, as they unite in the service of G-d.

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Highlights for May 25 – June 1 / 16 Sivan - 22 Sivan

Shabbat, May 25

7:45 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, Reasons for Mitzvot, Or Chaim

10:20 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, Parshah, Clanton Park

5:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Zechariah's Hope, BAYT, *women*

7:50 PM Adam Frieberg, Pirkei Avot, Shaarei Tefillah

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Kosher Beer, BAYT

Sunday, May 26

Visit us at the UJA Walk with Israel - Rest Stop 1!

9:15 AM Hillel Horovitz, Parshah, Zichron Yisroel, Hebrew (Shacharit 8:30 AM) **not this week**

6:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Contemporary Halachah in Israel, **Hebrew**, 4 Tillingham Keep, *mixed*

40 min. pre-minchah R' Baruch Weintraub, Contemporary Halachah in Israel, **Hebrew**, Clanton Park, *men*

Monday, May 27

8 PM Monday Beit Midrash: Bnai Torah, Clanton Park

8 PM Hillel Horovitz, Melachim II:11-14, Bnai Torah

9 PM Hillel Horovitz, Rav Kook's Ein Ayah, Bnai Torah

Tuesday, May 28

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daniel: Beasts 2 and 3

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Rambam's Laws of Kings: International Law, Shomrai Shabbos, *men*

Wednesday, May 29

10 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Supernatural and Superstition II, Week 7 of 8: Resurrection #1, BEBY

12:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Business Ethics Luncheon: Returning Defective Products, Zeifmans, 201 Bridgeland Avenue *lunch, free of charge, RSVP to mazins@zeifmans.ca*

8 PM Chabura Night at BAYT

- R' Ezra Goldschmiedt: Path of the Just
- Hillel Horovitz: Topic YBA
- R' Mordechai Torczyner: Medical Halachah

After Maariv Chabura Night at Shaarei Shomayim

Thursday, May 30

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Sotah, Clanton Park

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