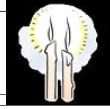


KUSHNER COMMENTS



Shabbat Candle Lighting: 8:01 PM
Havdalah: 9:01 PM

(Times are for Livingston, NJ)

Parsha Summary: *Parshat Beha'alotcha*

This parsha contains many famous stories and events. Among these events is with the dedication of the *Menorah*, at the very beginning of our *parsha* as well as the account of those who had been impure at the time of the *korban Pesach*, the Pesach offering, whose initiative prompted to give the mitzvah of *Pesach sheini*, the second Pesach offering. The parsha also tells about the divine signs that led *Bnei Yisrael* in their travels, the *anan* (cloud) and *esh* (fire,) as well as the man-made signifier, the trumpets. The Torah then recounts Moshe asking Yitro to travel with *Bnei Yisrael*, as well as the famous *pesukim* describing the travel of the *aron kodesh*, or the holy ark. In addition, the *parsha* includes the story of *Bnei Yisrael*'s complaints about the manna, and the subsequent establishment of the *Sanhedrin* to assist Moshe in his dealings with the nation. Finally, in the end of the *parsha* Miriam and Aharon question Moshe's uniqueness and as a result Miriam is given *tsara'at* and she is forced to live in quarantine until she recovers.

Great Beginnings

Rabbi Dovid Sukenik

At the beginning of this week's *parsha*, *Rashi* asks why the telling of the gifts of the *nesi'im*, or tribal leaders, (at the end of *parshat Naso*) is followed directly by the dedication of the *Menorah* (in the beginning of *parshat Beha'alotcha*.) He answers that when Aharon saw the gifts of the *nesi'im*, he was disappointed that he was unable to participate with them, as his *shevet*, *shevet Levi*, didn't bring its own gift. Hashem comforts Aharon by telling him that his share in the *Mishkan* would be greater than all others because he and his children would be the ones to light the *Menorah*. As such, the dedication of the *Menorah* is the next subject that the Torah addresses.

The dedication of something new carries with it a spark of inspiration. It is an opportunity to build something great.

One may wonder why Aharon was so bothered by the fact that he wasn't a participant in the gifts of the *nesi'im*. What was so special about the event that he felt disappointed? After all, couldn't he just give his own gift another time if he really felt left out? Rabbi Bernard Weinberger, in his *sefer Shemen Hatov*, explains that Aharon was disappointed because he missed out on a tremendous opportunity. The dedication of something new carries with it a spark of inspiration. It is an opportunity to build something great. By not joining with the other tribes in this *mitzvah*, Aharon was missing out on that opportunity. That is why he was disappointed.

This answer is very relevant for us today. At the beginning of the school year, we are invigorated and

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פרשת בהעלותך



In *parshat Beha'alotcha*, a Torah portion packed with well-known events, it is natural that smaller verses will be forgotten. Immediately preceding the famous travelling of the *aron hakodesh*, or holy ark, (verses that are recited whenever the Torah is removed or returned to the ark for Torah reading,) is a short discourse between Moshe and Yitro. In *perek 10, pesukim 29-32*, Moshe approaches Yitro and tells him to dwell with the Jewish people, informing him that it would be in his best interest. Once Yitro declines the offer, Moshe essentially pleads with him to remain, stating: "Please do not leave us, inasmuch as you know where we should camp in the wilderness and can be our guide."

Ramban very simply interprets the *passuk* as a plea for Yitro, the experienced "boy scout" of the desert, to remain with them as a strategist in traversing the desert and entering *Eretz Yisrael*. And yet, how could Moshe request additional guidance when Hashem was leading them every step of the way? God had provided them with miraculous manna from heaven and water from a rock, and He had led and protected them 24-hours a day. How could Moshe have the audacity to ask for human direction?

The outsider's angle that Yitro could provide would give the Jewish people perspective, reminding them of God's miracles that otherwise may have been overlooked.

Although it is easy to be critical of Moshe, his actions were in fact quite calculated and intentional. Rabbi Hanan Schlesinger, quoting Rabbi Dov Begun, maintains that it is specifically because of Hashem's constant watch over the Jewish people that an external pair of eyes was necessary. Between the cloud by day and the fire by night, God's shield of protection was ever-present. With such privileged accommodations, the Jewish people were likely to forget Hashem's kindness, taking it as an entitlement rather than as a gift. Moshe beseeched Yitro to stay because he would demarcate the parts of nature that would otherwise have been difficult. As a tour guide, he would notice mountain ranges that were tough to traverse and sand that would normally have been hot and slippery. The outsider's angle would give the Jewish people perspective, reminding them of God's miracles that otherwise may have been overlooked.

In modern day, perhaps these less familiar Torah portions serve as our own reminder of life's smaller miracles. Much as Yitro opened the Jewish people's eyes to the constant miracles, the Torah portion reminds us to appreciate everyday blessings. We must express *hakarat hatov*, recognition of good, for our daily opportunities; we must be thankful for life itself.

Alexis Mayer is an alumna of RKYHS (Class of 2008) and Carly Mayer is a junior at RKYHS.

inspired to get the year off to a great start. Towards the end of the year things start to slow down. People are tired and ready for the summer. It is precisely at this time that we are given *Shavuot* every year. It is a time of renewal in our study of Torah. It is a time to re-commit ourselves in order to be able to carry the added inspiration through the end of the school year and into the summer. Let us try to build off of this opportunity and be able to end the year with a "fresh start!"

Rabbi Sukenik teaches Talmud in RKYHS and in the JKHA Middle School.