



Wembley Synagogue

בְּהַעֲלֹתְךָ

Insights from the commentators into the Sidra of Beha'alotcha

בְּהַעֲלֹתְךָ אֶת הַנֵּרוֹת - *When you kindle the lamps....* (8:2)

Rashi explains that the word "beha'alotecha" (literally "when you step up") is used because there was a ma'aleh — step — in front of the menorah on which the Kohen stood as he prepared the wicks and oil of the menorah. The height of the menorah was only three amot, approximately five feet; why did Aharon need to stand on a step in order to reach the top of the menorah? Aharon, as Kohen Gadol, wore the tzitz — head-plate — and according to halachah it was forbidden for the Kohen Gadol to raise his hands above it (Rambam Hilchot Nesi'at Kapayim 14:9). It was therefore necessary to have steps in front of the menorah so that when the Kohen Gadol would kindle the lights he would be able to do so without lifting his hands above the permitted height. (Source: Vedibarta Bam)

אֶל מוּל פְּנֵי הַמְּנוֹרָה הָעֹלָה נִרְתְּיָהּ - *Toward the face of the menorah shall the seven lamps cast light.* (8:2) There is a Midrash that states in connection to this pasuk "Peitach devarecha ya'ir" — "Your opening words illuminate" (Psalms 119:130). What is the meaning of this Midrash? The menorah had seven branches, nine flowers, eleven knobs, and twenty-two cups, and according to the Gemara (Menachot 28b) it was eighteen tefachim (handbreadths) tall. By quoting the pasuk "your opening words illuminate" the Midrash is alluding that the "opening words," i.e. the first pasuk of each of the five chumashim, have a connection to a part of the menorah. The first pasuk of Bereishit contains seven words, corresponding to the seven branches of the menorah. The first pasuk of Shemot contains eleven words, which correspond to the eleven knobs of the menorah. The first pasuk of Vayikra has nine words, corresponding to the nine flowers. The first pasuk of Bamidbar has seventeen words, and counting the entire pasuk as one (known in gematria as "im hakolel"), corresponds to the height of the menorah. The first pasuk of Devarim has twenty-two words for the twenty-two cups of the menorah. (Source: Vedibarta Bam)

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַפֶּסַח בְּמוֹעֲדוֹ - *The Children of Israel shall make the Pesach-offering in its appointed time.* (9:2) The bringing of Pesach-offering is contingent upon entering Eretz Yisrael (see Shemot 12:25, Rashi), and the one offered in the wilderness was by special command of Hashem. When Hashem commanded the Jews to prepare a Pesach-offering, some people were defiled and unable to participate. They were eager to be included and came to Moshe complaining: לָמָּה נִגְרַעְתָּ — "Why should we be withheld" (lit. "diminished")" from participating in the sacrifice? (9:7) Moshe brought their plea before Hashem, and He gave a special dispensation. A second opportunity known as Pesach Sheni one month later would be given to those unable to participate in the first Pesach-offering.

וַיְהִי בְּנִסְעֵי הָאָרוֹן.....שׁוּבָה ה' רַבּוֹת אֶלְפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל - *And it came to pass when the Ark set forward... Return, O G-d, to the myriad of thousands of Israel* (10:35-36) Why are there inverted "nuns" — setting off the two verses of "vayehi binso'a"? Various reasons are given- this is just one. In Aramaic the word "nun" means fish (see Onkelos 11:5). The life of a fish depends in a large measure on its ability to swim upstream. If it permits itself to be swept along by the current of the rapids or the tide, it will be scuttled and squashed. It is only because Hashem has endowed the fish with the precious instinct of self-preservation, whereby it is able to swim upstream against the current, that it can survive and increase. Jews have been compared to fish. Our forefather Yaakov blessed his children that וַיִּדְגּוּ לְרַב בְּקִרְבֵּי הָאָרֶץ — "and may they increase abundantly like fish in the midst of the earth." His intent was that just as live fish swim against the tide, so his children should swim upstream and resist the temptation to take the easy way of going with the tide of fads and crazes. The message of the "inverted nuns" — in connection with "vayehi binso'a ha'Aron" is that to travel with the holy Ark a Jew must be ready to go against the tide and proudly stand resolute in his convictions.

זָכַרְנוּ אֶת הַדִּגָּה אֲשֶׁר נָאֲכַל בְּמִצְרַיִם חָפְסִים - *We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt gratis...* (11:5) The Egyptians were very unsympathetic to their Jewish slaves and did not even give them straw required to make the bricks (Shemot 5:7). Did they give them free fish? In Egypt it rained very little and the country would rely on the Nile river for irrigation. When the water would rise and flow into the fields, it would contain fish, and when the water would subside, the fish remained on the ground. Thus, the Jewish slaves who worked the

fields for their masters would take home fish together with vegetables from the fields. (Source: Vedibarta Bam)

Two men remained behind in the camp; the name of one was Eldad and the name of the second was Meidad. (11:26) Who were Eldad and Meidad? According to one opinion they were maternal brothers of Moshe and Aharon. When Pharaoh decreed that the Jewish children be drowned, Amram saw no purpose in remaining married and divorced Yocheved. She then married Elitzafan, son of Parnach, and gave birth to Eldad and Meidad. Encouraged by Miriam, Amram afterwards remarried Yocheved, and she bore Moshe (see *Sotah* 12a). According to another opinion, Eldad was really Avidan ben Gidoni, the Prince of the tribe of Binyamin, and Meidad was Kemu'el ben Shiftan, the *nasi* of the tribe of Ephraim (34:21-24). They were among the 72 people from whom Moshe was to select a *Sanhedrin*. The 70 members of the *Sanhedrin* died in the wilderness, but Eldad and Meidad merited entering *Eretz Yisrael*. There is an opinion that they were paternal brothers of Moshe. Included in the relationships the Torah forbids is a nephew marrying an aunt (*Vayikra* 18:12). Thus, when the Torah was given, Amram divorced Yocheved since she was his father's sister (*Shemot* 6:20), and he married another woman who gave birth to two sons, Eldad and Meidad. A difficulty some raise with this opinion is that the Torah was given in the third month after the exodus from Egypt and the episode of Eldad and Meidad took place in the second year after the exodus; consequently, they were less than one year old! To answer this difficulty we must say that Amram's separation from Yocheved was indeed due to the prohibition against marrying an aunt, however; it took place long before the actual giving of Torah. He did it upon learning prophetically that Torah would eventually forbid marriage to an aunt, or when Moshe told him that Torah would forbid such marriages.

And the man Moshe was the most humble of all people. (12:3) The word "v'ha'ish," "and the man," seems to be superfluous. It should have been written, "and Moshe." Harav Eliyahu Meir Bloch, zl, quotes the pasuk in Shmuel I, 15:17, "Though you are small in your own eyes, you are the head of the tribes of Yisrael," in which the Navi criticises King Shaul for being overly humble. In the end, this misplaced humility resulted in Shmuel telling King Shaul, "You have rejected the word of G-d." Evidently, the only blemish to be found on Shaul's character was his excessive humility. Should this have been sufficient cause for the prophet to so severely reprimand Shaul? We see from here that while humility may be an impressive virtue, it must be tempered with a balance of authority. Uncontrolled, humility can have tragic results, as seen in Shaul's situation. Hashem creates man in such a manner that he is balanced. If an individual acts excessively to either extreme, if he is too humble or if he gets carried away with a desire for power, he tips the delicate balance. Then he may be consumed by this character trait. This is the reason that the Torah emphasises the "ish", "man," Moshe, a person who was in total control of himself. He kept within his limits. While in his heart he was the epitome of humility, he knew full well his value. Yet, he realised that as the accepted leader of the Jewish people, he must maintain a presence befitting his lofty position. (Source: Peninim on the Torah)

Why is the word "עָנָו" – *anav* spelled without a *yud*?

The final words respectively of the five *books of the Chumash* are *beMitzrayim*, *ma'aseihem*, *Sinai*, *Yericho*, *Yisrael*. The last letter of each of these words together add up to one hundred and twenty-six, which is also the numerical value of the word "*anav*" without a *yud*. The Torah is telling us that though Moshe knew the entire Torah till the very last letter; nevertheless, he was not conceited, and he remained forever "the humblest of all people." Alternatively, when there was no water and the people quarrelled with Moshe, Hashem told him to gather them together and speak to the rock to give its waters. Moshe and Aharon gathered the entire congregation before the rock and said to them, "Listen now, you rebels, from this rock *notzi lachem mayim* – shall we bring forth water for you?" (20:10) Water from a rock is an exceptional miracle; thus, instead of taking the credit for themselves and saying "*notzi*" – "shall we bring forth" – they should have said "*yotzi*" – "He [Hashem] will bring forth." Hashem conducts Himself with man "*middah keneged middah*" – "measure for measure" – and punishes in a way that resembles the offence. Since Moshe omitted the *yud*, which would have alluded to Hashem; in describing his humility, Hashem also omitted the *yud*.

Shabbat Shalom



Shabbat starts 8.00pm



Shabbat ends: 10.13pm

The *Insights into the Sedra* sheet is produced by Chazan Anthony Wolfson
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