



Daf Hashavua

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Beha'alotcha **בְּהֵעֲלוֹתְךָ**

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In loving memory of Yisrael Shmuel ben Yirmaya Yehoshuah



“A wind went forth from God and blew quail from the sea and spread them over the camp, a day’s journey this way and a day’s journey that way, all around the camp, and two cubits above the face of the earth” (Bemidbar 11:30-31).

Sidrah Summary: Beha'alotcha

1st Aliya (Kohen) – Bemidbar 8:1-14

God tells Moshe to instruct Aharon, the Kohen Gadol, to light the Menorah every day in the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle). God tells Moshe to appoint the Levi'im to their service in the *Mishkan* (see p.3 article). This involves bringing two animal offerings, the people placing their hands upon the heads of the Levi'im and each Levi being physically lifted in the air and waved by Moshe and Aharon.

2nd Aliya (Levi) – 8:15-26

The tribe of Levi is to take over the role that had been designated for the firstborn, who were sanctified on the night of the Exodus from Egypt, when the Egyptian firstborn were slain and the Israelite firstborn survived.

Point to Consider: *Why were the firstborn dismissed from their role? (see Rashi to 8:17)*

3rd Aliya (Shlishi) – 9:1-14

In the second year after the Exodus, on 14 Nissan, God commands the people to bring their Pesach offerings. There are people who are ritually impure, having recently come into contact with a dead person. Unable to bring an offering, they come to Moshe and Aharon and express their desire not to miss out. God tells Moshe that they can have a second chance, a month later, on what becomes known as *Pesach Sheni* ('the second Pesach').

4th Aliya (Revi'i) – 9:15-10:10

A cloud covers the *Mishkan* by day, with a fiery appearance at night. The Israelites remain encamped until the cloud lifts, which is the signal to journey on. The duration of time during which the cloud covers the *Mishkan* varies. God tells Moshe to make two silver trumpets to summon the people before travelling in the desert. The trumpets are also to be blown when the nation is at war, in order to evoke Divine mercy, as well as to accompany communal offerings on Shabbat and festival days.

5th Aliya (Chamishi) – 10:11-34

In the second year after the Exodus, on 20 Iyar, the cloud lifts and the nation journeys from the Sinai

desert to the Paran desert. The Torah describes the order of the tribes' journeying and the different stages of dismantling and erecting the *Mishkan*. Moshe asks his father-in-law Yitro, referred to here as Chovav, to join the nation on their journey.

6th Aliya (Shishi) – 10:35-11:29

When the *Aron* (ark) would start its miraculous journey in front of the nation, Moshe would appeal to God to scatter His enemies.

The people complain. God sends a fatal fire against them, until Moshe pleads for mercy on their behalf. The 'rabble' then complain about the manna, which does not taste as good as the food in Egypt. God is angered. Moshe says he is helpless to deal with the nation's complaints. God tells him to appoint 70 elders to assist in leading the nation. God tells Moshe that, in response to their complaints, the nation will be given meat for a whole month, until they are sick of it. The 70 elders are appointed and are given prophetic powers.

Point to Consider: *Why are there inverted letter 'nuns' placed before and after the first verse of this Aliyah? (see Rashi to 10:35)*

7th Aliya (Shevi'i) – 11:30-12:16

A wind blows quails into the camp. The people gather the quails and start eating them, but God sends 'a mighty blow' against the people for their original complaints. Miriam and Aharon speak negatively about Moshe (see p.4 article). God rebukes them and Miriam develops a *tsara'at* skin affliction. Moshe prays for her recovery. Miriam is quarantined outside the camp for seven days, during which the people do not journey.

Haftarah

The prophet Zecharia relates a vision in which an angel visits Yehoshua the Kohen Gadol and chastises him, as symbolised by Yehoshua's soiled garments. The angel also shows Zecharia a menorah and two olives trees to provide oil for lighting it, indicating that the Second Temple will not be built by use of force, but by God's spirit



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Hitting the Ground Running

by Rabbi Yoni Golker, Assistant Rabbi, St John's Wood United Synagogue



Randy Pauschs, a professor of computer science at the University of Pennsylvania, was diagnosed with terminal cancer in 2007. That autumn, faced with the likelihood of surviving for only a couple of months, Randy summed up

his life's lessons for his children and students. He delivered his inspiring lecture to several hundred students. It has since been viewed on YouTube over 20 million times. During his discourse, he observed: "Time is all you have, and you may find one day that you have less than you think".

This sobering reminder is echoed in this week's sidrah.

From the time a Levi was 25 years old, he was to enter into the Temple service (Bemidbar 8:24). Rashi (1040-1105) notes the contradiction between this verse and an earlier verse (ibid. 4:3) which states that the age of service for the Levi'im began at 30, not 25. Citing the Talmud, he reconciles the two verses, by explaining that the Levi'im would come to the Temple at 25 to commence a five-year training period. Proper service commenced at age 30.

Rabbi Dov Zeev Weinberger, in his work *Shemen HaTov*, questions the lengthy training period for Levi'im. Furthermore, a Kohen's service in the Bais Hamikdash was seemingly much more intricate and involved than a Levi's, yet we do not find that the Kohanim had to undergo a training period. Why was this?

Rabbi Weinberger answers that a Kohen could perform the Temple service from 13 until death. He could thus be serving in the Temple for 60 or 70 years. He could afford the luxury of a couple of years 'to get up to speed'. A Levi's service period, on the other hand, was just 20 years. As soon as he turned 30, the clock started ticking. Immediately upon reaching 50, he had to retire.

Someone with such a limited period of service at his disposal needed to hit the ground running, and could not afford to waste any time. He needed to be fully prepared from day one. Therefore a Levi trained for five years before the clock started ticking.

We may also be in danger of feeling that we have all the time in the world, leading us to waste time. There is a familiar allegory that serves as a stark reminder of this. Imagine that there is a bank that credits your account each morning with £86,400. It carries over no balance from day to day. Every evening it deletes whatever part of the balance you failed to use during the day.

What would you do? Presumably draw out every penny! Each one of us has such a bank. Its name is "time".

Every morning, it credits us with 86,400 seconds. Every night it writes off as lost whatever portion of this we may have failed to invest to good purpose. It carries over no balance. It allows no overdraft. Each day – we hope and pray – it opens a new account for us. Each night it burns the remains of the day. If we fail to use the day's deposits, the loss is ours.

There is no going back or drawing against the 'tomorrow'. We try to hit the ground running. The clock is ticking. Make the most of today!



A Catchy Tune

by Rebbetzen Raisel Freedman, Ma'ayan



A few months ago, a spoof video made the rounds, gently poking fun at the way that Jewish music and in particular Jewish music videos are made today. To highlight their point, seemingly random verses were chosen as the basis of the very catchy 'song', which happened to come from parashat Tazria (Vayikra 13:49). More specifically, they referred to the signs of *tsara'at*, a skin disease associated with the transgression of *lashon hara*, negative speech about other people. It is deeply ironic that these words were used as part of a song designed to evoke humour, as *lashon hara* is an extremely serious transgression, the extent of which can be seen in this week's sidrah.

The Torah states: "Miriam and Aharon spoke against Moshe regarding the Cushite woman [Zipporah] that he had married" (Bemidbar 12:1). Rashi (1040-1105) points out that Miriam's name is mentioned first to hint that she had initiated this conversation, in order to relate something of interest to Aharon. Based on the Midrash, Rashi explains that Miriam had been standing next to Moshe's wife Tziporah when an earlier event in the sidrah occurred.

Eldad and Meidad prophesied that Moshe would not take the Israelites into the Land of Israel. Whilst most of nation was shocked at this revelation, Miriam happened to be next to Tziporah when she heard the news; Tziporah's response was different. She remarked: "woe to their wives who will now have to separate from their husbands [Eldad and Meidad], the way that I have separated from mine". At this point Miriam realised that Tziporah and Moshe were no longer living together as husband and wife, due to the fact that Moshe had to be in a constant state of readiness to receive direct communication from God. When Miriam heard this, she went to her brother Aharon and passed on the information. The Midrash points out that Miriam did not

denigrate Moshe, nor did she pass any substantial comment, but the mere act of relating this piece of information unnecessarily was enough for her to contract *tsara'at*; it was *lashon hara* – unacceptable negative speech.

Like a catchy tune, sometimes we hear something that sticks in our mind. It could be something surprising about someone, or just something that we think would add interest to a Shabbat table conversation. But do we really need to share it?

This episode teaches us that *lashon hara* can be the simplest comment of: "did you hear..." or "did you know that..." The passing along of a little tidbit of information about someone else can turn us into the gossip that we are warned about elsewhere in the Torah, "do not be a peddler of gossip among your people" (Vayikra 19:16) If we find ourselves in this position, wanting to share an interesting story, it is advisable to pause, think of the catchy song and perhaps discuss something that would never have led to *tsara'at*. Alternatively, when in doubt, let us heed the advice of the Talmudic sage Rabbi Shimon in Pirkei Avot: "I did not find anything better for the body than silence" (Ethics of the Fathers 1:7).



Jewish Contemporary Ethics Part 33: Ethical Issues in Tanach 11: Amalek I

by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman, New West End Synagogue



The previous article discussed eradicating the barbaric practices of the idolatrous Canaanite nations by waging war against them. Eliminating these brutal rituals, such as child sacrifice, was a moral

imperative. The campaign included offering peace, contingent upon the Canaanites adopting the universal morals of the seven Noachide laws. This was in stark contrast to the commandment to annihilate the nation of Amalek by killing every man, woman and child (see the Book of Shmuel I 15:3). How are we to understand this mitzvah?

Amalek was a grandson of Esav (Bereishit 36:12) and the nation which he spawned was infused with the hatred that Esav had harboured towards his brother Yaakov after their father had granted Yaakov the birthright blessing (Bereishit 27). Despite an apparent rapprochement between the two brothers (Bereishit 33), this hatred continued throughout the generations, culminating in the Amalekites launching brutal attacks against the fledgling Israelite nation (Shemot 17:8-16, Bemidbar 14:45 and Devarim 25:17-19). God therefore commanded that we “erase the memory of Amalek and wage war against them from generation to generation”. Rashi (1040-1105) notes that while Amalek lost the initial battle, their actions paved the way for other nations to attack, and so they must be annihilated.

It is therefore clear that the nation of Amalek is the archetypal enemy of the Jewish people, tantamount to the embodiment of anti-Semitism. But how does that justify killing even Amalekite children?

There are numerous approaches to this question; the most cogent argument expresses a utilitarian

motive. Given that the Israelite nation was as yet stateless, there was no gain or practical reason for Amalek to attack them. Unlike other barbaric nations, the Amalekite motive was purely an evil act of hatred. Rabbi Yitzchak Abarbanel (1437-1508) explains that their annihilation would serve as a deterrent to other nations.

Similarly, the Ramban (Nachmanides d. 1194-1270) writes that Amalek is intrinsically evil, as proven in the story of Shaul’s misplaced clemency on Agag, the Amalekite king (Shmuel I 15:9). Before Shmuel eventually executed him, Agag fathered a child who perpetuated the Amalekite nation (Talmud Megillah 13a) yielding the wicked Haman (Megillat Esther 3:1).

Does “the end justify the means”? Rabbi Yaakov Medan (of Yeshivat Har Etzion) argues that the command to kill every “man and woman, infant and suckling” (Shmuel I 15:3) does not inevitably demand genocide. Instead, Shmuel’s command meant that when waging war, a Jewish army may have to be uncompromising in their efforts to remove this destructive evil from the world. In modern terms, despite causing as many as 135,000 violent civilian deaths, the controversial bombing of Dresden during World War II was justified by the 1953 United States Air Force report because it eliminated the Nazis’ ability to reinforce a counter-attack against the advancing Russian army. Even the most precise modern firepower cannot entirely mitigate against innocent casualties, even when clearly and correctly attempting to do so.

The next article will discuss whether the commandment to destroy Amalek applies in modern times and if so, what it means today.

The Symbols of the *Shevatim*: Part 8: Yosef

by Rabbi Jeremy Lawrence, Finchley United Synagogue



Yaakov's eleventh son was Yosef, the first born to his mother Rachel. The name indicates both Rachel's relief that God had ended (*asa*) her barrenness and her yearning that He would add (*yosef*) one more (Bereshit 23:24).

Generally, when the tribes are referred to in Tanach (the Hebrew bible), Yosef is divided into his sons, Menashe and Ephraim, who operated separately and had different land allocations.

When Yaakov blessed his sons, he described Yosef as a fruitful tree or vine alongside a spring, with branches overflowing the ramparts (ibid. 49:22). Rashi (1040-1105) explains this to mean that Yosef was a charming and good-looking son, whose beauty led Egyptian girls to climb walls to catch a glimpse of him. The blessing continued with a reference to the sharp tongues or arrows pointed at Yosef by his adversaries, from which he was protected by God.

The many depictions of Yosef's tribe include sheaves of plenty, consistent with the blessings for the future, as well as his role as provider of sustenance in Egypt. This was the motif selected for the Israel Tribal Stamp set in 1955. Yosef is also depicted as a vine overflowing a wall, a bunch of grapes or a tree.

The Midrash, identifying the tribal emblems for the banners, divides Yosef into the two sub-tribes. Ephraim is represented by the ox, which the Midrash associates with Ephraim's notable scion, Moshe's successor Yehoshua.

Menashe is represented by the horned *Re'eim* (ram), which the Midrash associates with his descendant, Gidon ben Yoash, the judge who carried out the devastating night assault against Midian (Shofetim/Book of Judges 7:17).

When Yaakov blessed Ephraim and Menashe, he deliberately reversed the seniority, placing his

right hand over Ephraim and his left hand over Menashe (Bereshit 48:14). Menashe's tribe would be great but the younger Ephraim's would be greater and more numerous.

In the census at the beginning of Bemidbar, Ephraim, which was larger, preceded Menashe (Bemidbar 1:32). His leader also brought his gift to the *Mishkan* first (7:48). However, in the census at the end of their travels, Menashe was larger and blessed first (26:34). In Devarim, Moshe followed Yaakov's order, noting the "myriads of Ephraim (tens of thousands) and the thousands of Menashe" (33:17). However, Rashi identifies these numbers not as progeny but as the magnitude of enemy casualties inflicted by Yehoshua and Gidon respectively.

After the conquest of Cana'an, half of Menashe remained on the east of the Jordan together with Reuven and Gad, thus giving Menashe one of the largest tribal allocations. As a result of the Assyrian conquest, ten tribes were lost, though some families of Menashe, Ephraim and Shimon escaped south into Judah (Divrei Hayamim II 15:9).

The Bnei Menashe Tribe in Manipur and Mizoram (northeast India adjacent to Burma) claim descent from the original displaced people of Menashe. Former Sephardi Chief Rabbi Amar of Israel (currently of Jerusalem) recognised their claim in 2005 to qualify for the Law of Return, whilst insisting that they undergo halachic conversion to facilitate full religious integration.



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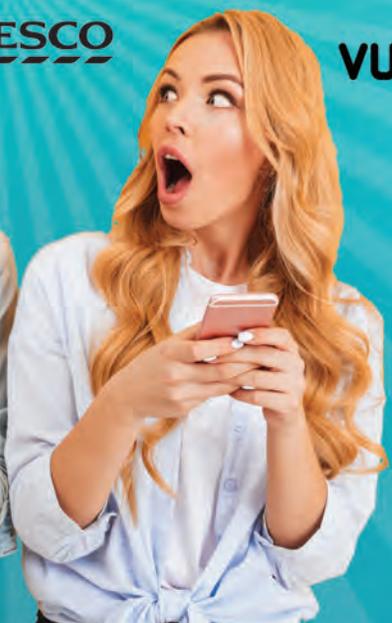
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BEHA'ALOTCHA: MARVELLOUS MIRIAM!



THIS WEEK'S PARASHA FEATURES THE MARVELLOUS **MIRIAM!**

I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT **MIRIAM** - DO YOU? JOIN US AS WE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT **MIRIAM** AND WHAT MAKES HER SO MARVELLOUS.



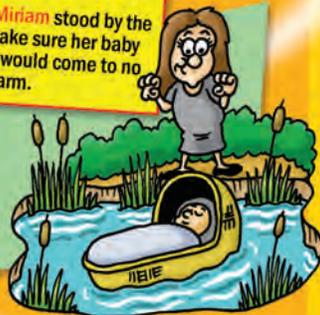
MIRIAM THE LEADER

Miriam, a leader of the women, came from a family of leaders.

Her parents were **Amram** and **Yocheved**, the leaders at that time, and her brothers were **Moshe** and **Aharon**.

MIRIAM THE PROTECTOR

As a young girl **Miriam** stood by the River Nile to make sure her baby brother **Moshe** would come to no harm.



MIRIAM THE PROPHETESS

Miriam prophesied that her mother would have a baby boy who would grow up to be the leader of the Jewish people. Indeed she did - **Moshe!**



MIRIAM THE MIDWIFE

Miriam and her mother **Yocheved** were midwives for the Jewish women in Egypt. With great courage, they defied Pharaoh and refused to kill the baby boys.

MIRIAM THE MUSICIAN

Miriam was so sure that the Jewish people would be saved that she persuaded all the women to bring with instruments to celebrate. After the splitting of the sea, **Miriam** was the first to lead the women in song and dance.



MIRIAM THE BELIEVER

Although it was years before she would see her prophecy come true, **Miriam** never lost hope. She always encouraged all the people around her to look forward to being free from Egypt.



MIRIAM AND WATER

Well well well! The **Torah** tells us that the Jewish people had a well of water in the desert in the merit of **Miriam**. When **Miriam** died, the well dried up and only after **Moshe** prayed to **God** did it start flowing again.



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