



LT TORAH TO GO

Volume 13 - Issue 39

Edited by Rabbi Mara Nathan on behalf of generations of Torah Learners at Larchmont Temple.

EXPERIENCE TORAH THIS WEEK: June 7-13
EREV SHABBAT 8:00PM
SHABBAT AM SERVICE SATURDAY 10:30AM

SHABBAT BEHA-ALOTECHA 5769

NUMBERS 8:1-12:16

pp. 1075-1100 in Torah, a Modern Commentary

PSHAT...*The plain/simple story*

In *parashat B'halot'cha*, God speaks to Moses, describing the menorah for the Tent of Meeting. The Levites are appointed to serve as assistants under Aaron and his sons. Those who are unable to celebrate Passover during *Nisan* are given a time in the month of *Sivan* to observe a "second Passover." A cloud by day and fire by night show God's presence over the Tabernacle. When the cloud lifts from the Tabernacle, the people leave Sinai, setting out on their journey, tribe by tribe. The Israelites complain about the lack of meat, and Moses becomes frustrated. God tells him to appoint a council of elders. God provides the people with meat and then strikes them down with a severe plague. Miriam and Aaron talk about the "Cushite Woman" whom Moses has married. In addition, they complain that God speaks not only through Moses but also through them. Miriam is struck with leprosy, and Moses begs God to heal her. After her recovery, the people resume their journey.

REMEZ...*Looking for clues*

When they were in *Hazereth*, Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman he had married: "He married a Cushite Woman!" They said, "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?" (Numbers 12:1-2)

Koshi: What prompts Aaron and Miriam to protest against Moses?

TARGUM ONKELOS...Miriam and Aaron criticize Moses for having separated himself from his beautiful wife, Zipporah. Furthermore, since the Torah mentions Miriam before Aaron, this must mean that she took the lead and provoked Aaron against Moses. For that reason she deserves a more severe punishment.

KASPI...Moses took another Cushite woman besides Zipporah as his wife. He did so for reasons of his own, and it is not right for us to pry into his business or his motives...

KIMCHI...Without seeking to understand his motives for marrying an additional woman, Miriam and Aaron criticize him. They leap to conclusions. They mistakenly assume, that as prophets, they are the equal of Moses; they therefore, believe they comprehend his reason for marrying again....they criticize him without justification and out of ignorance.

DRASH...*Discovering Meaning...*

LEIBOWITZ...it was the human weakness of jealousy that filled Miriam and Aaron. It drove them to speak against Moses. Evidently the Torah did not wish to prohibit merely explicit gossip about people in general and the spiritual leaders of our generation in particular. It wished to prohibit any kind of talk or gossip disparaging of others... should one of your friends be superior to you...in deeds...do not allow your evil inclination to say "stirrup the opinion of others against him. Find fault with him. Spread lies to diminish his good reputation." Instead, say to your evil inclination, "remember what happened to Miriam and Aaron when they spoke against Moses."

Yashar Koach to this week's Bar Mitzvah:

SAM COUSIN

Come hear him teach Torah this Saturday at 10:30AM

SOD...Finding Ourselves

The portion Beha'lotecha is mainly about how Aaron and Miriam insult Moses and seem to try to turn the people he has led through the desert against him. For example, the two prophets Miriam and Aaron ask each other why their younger brother Moses married a Cushite woman instead of one of their own people. In addition, they also gossip about why G-D only talks to Moses and not them even though they are prophets too.

This doesn't help Moses when the Israelites already complain and question his leadership! G-D punishes Miriam by giving her leprosy and forcing her to be exiled from the camp for a short period of time.

My key koshi is why do Miriam and Aaron decide to insult Moses. What were they trying to accomplish? Nehama Leibowitz answers this by saying that "Miriam wanted to make the great person small." She did not want to accept the possibility that Moses was of more significance than her. Leibowitz says this Torah story is meant to teach us that gossip or slander are not good ways to deal with our feelings of envy.

I personally agree because it seems that gossip can sometimes result in hurting yourself as well as someone else. Because if you "trash talk" about a guy and his best friend is the strongest kid in school--or say "G-D" in this Torah portion--then you're going to get beat up. It also in the end doesn't make you feel any better about yourself by putting someone else down. In addition, if you gossip about someone who is trying to accomplish something for the group, then you, unlike that person, are not doing your share to help the group, you are actually hurting the group instead.

I think this portion relates to me because when you're in a community you know that everyone needs to work together and not talk about each other in a bad way if you want to get something done....I think what I'm trying to say is that people should think before they speak. Instead of slandering people when we are angry we should try to find the real importance of the situation and see if we can cooperate to accomplish something..... **SAM COUSIN**

MITZVAH of the WEEK...

SAM is working with the Midnight Run to donate, sort, and hand out clothing and food to help the homeless in New York City. "During one of the midnight runs which I did, my dad and I were driving late at night in a caravan from Larchmont to a street corner in New York City to distribute food and clothing. Dad and I became very frustrated and upset when half of the people we were following, and thought were in the same caravan as us, went left and the other half went right at a light. We, however, found our way safely through calm communication with the rest of the group. The important thing was that rather than blame someone else and give up, we worked together, avoided frustration and helped lots of people."