

**Parshat Beha'alotkha:  
Going Up With A Friend**  
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*Class of 2020*

**יא** וַיְהִי בַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִיית, בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי--בְּעֶשְׂרִים בַּחֹדֶשׁ; נִעְלָה, הָעֶנָן, מֵעַל, מִשְׁכַּן הָעֵדוּת. **11** And it came to pass in the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, that the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle of the testimony.

**יב** וַיֵּסְעוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִסְעֵיהֶם, מִמִּדְבַּר סִינַי; וַיֵּשְׁכּוּ הָעֶנָן, בְּמִדְבַּר פָּאָרָן. **12** And the children of Israel set forward by their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud abode in the wilderness of Paran.

Why did Bnai Israel set on their journeys on the 20<sup>th</sup> of the second month of the second year? (Numbers 10:11-12)?

As we learn in the Book of Deuteronomy, the journey from Mt. Sinai to the border of the land (*Kadesh Barne'a*) is a journey of 11 days (Deuteronomy 1:2). The idea was to reach the Land on the first day of the third month, one year after the arrival at Sinai. Had that plan worked out, we would have entered the Land on the first anniversary of the Giving of the Law, strengthening the connection between the Torah (how to live) and the Land (where to live it). Our entry would have coincided with the time of harvest (*Katzir*) and first fruit (*Bikurim*), with its future connections to the Temple. However, due to the various delays, the People arrived at *Kadesh Barne'a* later, in time for the grape harvest. They were exhausted and worried, sent the spies, then fell for their demagoguery on Tish'a Be'av, postponing their entry by decades.

This week's reading marks that pivotal point between the journey that should have ended in no more than eighteen months. Instead, it lasted for 40 years. The Torah portion should have been named something like "the disaster". Instead, it is called "Be'ha'alotcha", erroneously often translated "when you light the lamp" when it really means "when you bring up", from the root א.ל.ה.ה.ל.ע. same as going up to the Torah and going to the Land of Israel.

Our sages tell us that the book of Numbers is really three books: first, chapters 1-10:34), and last, chapters 11-36. In between them, there are two verses (chapter 10:35-36) which the sages deemed as the second book.

It is easy to understand the theme of the "first book", which centers on the last preparations and the final stages of the journey, including organizing the traveling camp and completing the *mishkan*. Similarly, it is easy to understand the theme of the "third book", which includes all the stories of the "delay": the complainers, the spies, Korach and his mutiny and more.

What are the two verses in between and why are those considered the whole "second book"? They will most likely look familiar from this week's Torah service:

**לה** וַיְהִי בְּנִסְעֵ הָאָרֶן, וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה: קוּמָה, יְהוָה, וַיִּפְצְצוּ אֹיְבֶיךָ, וַיִּגְסּוּ מִשְׁנָאֵיךָ, מִפְּנֵיךָ. **35** And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said: 'Rise up, O LORD, and let Thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee.'

**לו** וּבִנְחָה, יֹאמֶר: שׁוּבָה יְהוָה, רַבְבוֹת אֲלֵפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. **36** And when it rested, he said: 'Return, O LORD, unto the ten thousands of the families of Israel.'

That was supposed to be the whole journey: the ark will travel and rest. The Children of Israel, led by Moshe, will travel safely and uneventfully. No enemies, no trouble. It's but a small distance. They'll arrive shortly. The end.

Interestingly, in every Torah scroll, these two verses are separated by two upside down letters, two upside down nun's. This was possibly done to accentuate the tragedy, as if to say, look! we were so, so close!

What happened? Was it Moshe who was tired and heartbroken from the situation brewing in front of his eyes which led to his inability to enter the Land, who lacked in his leadership skills? Were the People, in spite of being at Sinai, in G-d's presence, and receiving the Law, not ready?

And yet, the Torah portion of this tragic turning point, is called "Beha'alotcha", literally, "as you bring up", lighting the menorah. Indeed, we like simple, quick stories, 90-120 minutes with "they lived happily ever after" caption smeared at the end. But, the journey is rarely that simple, and rather, often, much more complicated than we initially expect. Even when the path is clear, we fall short, have regrets, change our mind, or get scared. Nevertheless, the Torah reminds us, our direction is still, always upward, to the light.

There is one more peculiar detail in this parasha. In Numbers 10:2 we find:

תַּעֲשֶׂה **2** בַּעֲשֵׂה לָךְ, שְׁתֵּי חֲצוֹצְרוֹת כֶּסֶף--מִקְשָׁה, תַּעֲשֶׂה  
 וְהָיוּ לָךְ לְמִקְרָא הָעֵדָה, וּלְמַסַּע  
 אֶת-הַמַּחֲנֹת. causing the camps to set forward.

Creating an instrument for calling is, of course, extremely useful when rounding up around two million people for a journey, but why trumpets? Why not a shofar, for example?

The Magid of Mezritch explains that *chatzotzrot*, חֲצוֹצְרוֹת, trumpets, means – *chatza'ei tzurot*, חֲצֵאֵי צוּרוֹת, half shapes. It is symbolic of the fact that every person is a half who finds his or her completion by connecting to another. We read that the People camped as one, and traveled as one. That too, depended on their "shape", on their formation. Like a huge machine where every part needs to be connected correctly to the right part, and only then, movement is possible, so it was with Bnai Israel.

The Kabbalists teach us that movement is an expression of light and wisdom. Those are things we aspire to, but detours must be expected. The Torah did well to teach us that this can happen to the best of us, from Moshe on, to one of the greatest generations to ever live. But it also taught us how to prepare for the detour: know yourself. Connect with one another. Build a whole. Keep moving towards the light, upward.



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