

In the Desert

I do not like the desert. On the positive side deserts act like a “castle” to defend its inhabitants – it was always very hard to attack countries protected by deserts. Deserts teach patience and courage – the desert is the one place that only the strongest survive. On the negative side the main disadvantage of deserts is the extremity in everything, e.g., temperature, weather patterns, and dryness. Deserts are either very cold or very hot and there is an extreme shortage of food and water and plant life. Deserts are dead and depressing, which perhaps explain why people who live in deserts are notoriously bad tempered. *Bamidbar* is replete with real life lessons, things that we *must* conquer in our faith-walk to be successful in the Lord. In the weeks to come, I plan to expound on a few principles that, if not paid attention to, can cause great pain.

Parashat Beha'alotcha – When You Step Up

This week's *Parashat* begins to alert us that things are not so easy for the “chosen people.” It all sounded so marvelous when *Adonai* spoke words such as *Am Segulah*, “my special treasure” and there is a tendency for all of us to have a time off / vacation mindset. This is a very American concept. People in other parts of the world, even in the rest of the Americas do not have the amount of time off we Americans do. They have no concept of what “vacation” means, nor that *time off with pay* is what most of us would call an inalienable right. When *Adonai* gave *Shabbat* to His People, the cessation of work required for *Shabbat* observance was, for the known world at that time, a completely novel idea. It was an idea not easily embraced by hardly any civilization. In many places in the world people work 24-7 and the concept of *paid time off* is pure fantasy. I think it is easy for our culture to look at the Children of Israel in the Book of Numbers and either reject them as totally stupid and stubborn people or be romantically wanting to be part of this *privileged* group (everything is beautiful in its own way...). Let me first set the stage by summarizing this week's *Torah* Portion: (Note: *Shabbat Torah Readings* are divided into seven sections. Each section is called an *Aliya* [lit. *Go up*]. For each *Aliya* one person “*goes up*” to make a *beracha* [blessing] on the *Torah* Reading)

1st Aliya: *Aharon* is instructed to light the *Menorah*, and the *Menorah's* construction is reviewed. *Moshe* is commanded to inaugurate the *Leviyim* (Levites) into the service of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle).

2nd Aliya: The *Leviyim* are inaugurated into Temple service. Their term of service was from age 25 - 50.

3rd Aliya: The Children of Israel keep their second *Pesach* since leaving Egypt. The laws of *Pesach-Shaini* - the makeup *Pesach* (in the second month) are taught for those who were unable to keep the *Aviv Pesach*.

4th Aliya: The movement of the Pillar of Clouds as the indicators of when to set or break the camp is identified. In addition to the Pillar of Clouds, *Moshe* is commanded to make two silver trumpets that would be used to herald the traveling of the encampment, or the movement of troops during war.

5th Aliya: The description of the nation's travels from the desert of Sinai is recorded. *Moshe* approaches *Yitro*, who refuses his offer to join them in the Promised Land.

6th Aliya: The two verses of “When the Ark went forth” are stated, and then things begin to unravel. The main body of this portion describes the nation's complaints against the physical conditions of their dwelling in the desert. Manna is described in contrast to the nation's desire for ‘*real food*’. *Moshe* expresses his frustrations as leader, and *Adonai* promises to send quail to satisfy the people's desire for meat. *Moshe* is instructed to appoint a Sanhedrin to help him govern and teach the nation. The 70 Elders are divinely confirmed, and *Eldad* and *Maydad* prophesy the transition of leadership from *Moshe* to *Yehoshua*.

7th Aliya: The quail descend upon the camp in such quantity that each person collected 1000 lb. of meat. *Aharon* and *Miriam* speak *Lashon Harah* (lit. evil tongue) about *Moshe*, resulting in *Adonai* reconfirming *Moshe* as His preeminent servant and prophet. *Miriam* is afflicted with *Tzaraat* (skin disease, KJV ‘leprosy’).

Principle Number 1 – We Must Learn to Limit What Comes Out of Our Mouth

Rebbetzin Marilyn developed a teaching back in 1991 (before *KS* existed) based on next week's *Parashah* (*Shelach*) entitled *Without Murmuring or Complaining*. Life is full of sources of irritation and we all fight for every “*right*” we believe we are entitled to, e.g., my time, my space, my money, my life, my, my... I want to begin our journey into the desert by examining the absolute truth of her teaching and it's relevance to our walk. {Testify on the Rep. (Brady) mayoral race and on the favor with Jim by vacuuming *KS* every day since May 9}

Without Murmuring and Complaining (based on *Parashat Shelach*)

On January 7, 1991, I had been whining and muttering discontentedly about how things WERE NOT happening in our home according to MY expectations. At 5:00 p.m. the Lord spoke by His Spirit and said to me:

“Honor your husband before ME, CONTINUALLY, WITHOUT MURMURING and COMPLAINING.”

Then the Holy Spirit began to open my understanding as follows:

1. Publicly I honor and respect my husband but He (The Lord) sees my heart when I complain and murmur about disappointments in secret.
2. Complaining opens the door to a root of bitterness. It is then that our words curse instead of bless; bring death not life. Negative expectations bind our husbands and God.
3. Complaining brings God's judgment! God considers it evil, sin, wickedness and rebellion.
4. Israel could have had all of their desires in 11 days (Deut. 1:2); instead they brought God's judgment and had to wait 38 years. Everything they wanted and needed was in Canaan in great abundance. The things they were complaining about, they were not allowed to have. WHY? *“By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”* (Matt. 12:37)

Considering Numbers, Chapter 14:

- Vs 2 Israel grumbled and deplored their situation, accusing Moses and Aaron. They said, *“would that we had died in Egypt! Or that we had died in this wilderness!”*
- Vs 3-4 Israel accuses the Lord for bringing them to the wilderness to die. They wanted to take matters into their own hands and go back to Egypt. (How does the *Am Segulah* feel now?)
- Vs 9 Complaining leads to rebellion (which is as the sin of witchcraft, see 1 Sam. 15:23)!
- Vs 11 The Lord said: *“Why do they provoke (despise) me? How long will it be before they believe (trusting in, relying on, clinging to me) even after all the miracles I have done for them?”*
- Vs 27 *“How long will this evil congregation murmur against me? I have heard the complaints the Israelites murmur against me”* They were discontented with their personal situation & wanted things their way
- Vs 28-29 The Lord said: *“What you have said in my hearing I will do to you: your dead bodies shall fall in the wilderness.”* (See what they said in verse 2)
- Vs 31 *“...the land that you have despised and rejected...”* Notice that land equals God's promises. Murmuring and complaining is equated to despising and rejecting God's promises.
- Vs 32 Our complaining causes others to complain. The ten men who returned *“made all the congregation grumble and complain against Moses.”* Note that those who brought an evil report of the land died by a plague before the Lord.

Steps of Action:

Bottom Line: Do we really believe God (trust in, rely on, cling to Him)?

How can we do it? *“He sends his word out over the earth, his command runs swiftly.”* (Ps. 147:15) and ¹¹*Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience.* ¹²*For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, & able to judge the thoughts & intentions of the heart.”* (Heb. 4:11, 12)

The living Word of Adonai governs the affairs of Satan; it is and will be his destruction! His Word always prevails! We want to speak Scripture for the things we want God to accomplish in our husbands, ourselves, our children and any other situation. Focus only on the PROMISE, which is seeing from God's perspective. Joshua and Caleb did exactly that and they received because they BELIEVED the promises God made. Are we going to possess the land or are we going to die in the wilderness? *“Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.”* (Mk. 11:23, 24)