

Step It Up

This week's *Parashat Beha'alotcha*, which means 'when you step up' begins to warn us that things are not so easy for the *chosen people* (whether the Children of Israel or for us as Believers). It all sounded so glorious when the Lord 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 called an *inalienable right*. When the Lord 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. In fact it was not an idea easily embraced by 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 (since ♪ *everything is beautiful in its own way*... ♪).

Here is a summary of 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: Aaron is instructed to light the *Menorah*, and the *Menorah's* construction is reviewed. *Moshe* is commanded to inaugurate the Levites into the service of the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*).

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

3rd Aliya: The Children of Israel keep their second *Passover* since leaving Egypt. The laws of *Pesach-Sheini* – the makeup *Passover* in the second month – are given for anyone who was unable to keep the *Pesach* in the first Hebrew month (*Nisan* or *Aviv*).

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, Moses 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. Moses approaches Jethro (his father-in-law), who refuses his offer to join them in the Promised Land.

6th Aliya: The famous verses of *when the Ark went forward* are stated. From these verses we get the Torah Processional prayer/chant "*Vay^ehi binsoa ha-Aron vayomer Moshe: kumah Adonai v^eyafutsu oy^evecha v^eya-nusu m^esanecha mipanecha. Ki mitzion tetze Torah, Ki mitzion tetze Torah, ud^evar Adonai mirushalayim. Baruch shenatan Torah, Torah (x2), l^eamo Yisrael bikdushato*" which means "*And it came to pass, whenever the ark went forward, Moses would say: "Arise O Lord, and let Your enemies be scattered. May those who hate You flee from before You. For from Zion shall go forth the Torah and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Blessed be He who in holiness gave the Torah to His people Israel."* Things begin to unravel and the remainder of this *Aliya* 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'. Moses expresses his frustrations as leader, and *Adonai* promises to send quail to satisfy the people's desire for meat. Moses is instructed to appoint a Sanhedrin to help him govern and teach the nation. The 72 Elders are divinely confirmed, and *Eldad* and *Maydad* prophesy the transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua.

7th Aliya: The quail descend upon the camp in such quantity that each person collected 1000 lb. of meat. Aaron and Miriam speak evil (in Hebrew *Lashón Hará*, literally, an evil tongue) against Moses and Miriam is stricken with a skin disease (Hebrew *Tzara'at*, in the KJV *leprosy*). How much of their complaint may have been driven by anger and jealousy? There are at least twelve references to anger/angry in the

Book of Wisdom (Proverbs), thirty-one in the Psalms and eleven in the New(er) Testament. In the CJB Ephesians 4:26 states: “*Be angry, but do not sin – do not let the sun go down before you have dealt with the cause of your anger.*” A casual interpretation of this passage might erroneously lead us to think that there is a measure of anger that is acceptable as long as we resolve it *before the sun goes down*. The truth of the matter is that if we keep reading the chapter 4 in context, we see and are commanded to: “*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you...*” (Vv. 31) The fact is that we are told in no uncertain terms to “**put away all anger.**” From this we can derive a very important Bible Principle: *We Must Learn to Limit What Comes Out of Our Mouth.*

The Bible is replete with examples that illustrate that tension is the key to anger, but unfortunately tension is cumulative. Should we not learn from the examples of Cain, Jacob, Balaam, Saul and David?

1. **Cain’s anger against his brother Abel** – Tension from conflict over the godly standards that he rejected
2. **Jacob’s anger toward Rachel** – Guilt from deception and unjust gain earlier in his life (Gen. 30)
3. **Balaam’s anger against his donkey** – Tension from willfulness in demanding his own way (Nu. 22)
4. **Saul’s anger vs. David/Jonathan** – Tension from bitterness with Michal xferred to others (1 Sam. 20)
5. **David’s anger against the thief** – Tension from the guilt of having committed the same sin (2 Sam. 10)

When it was all said and done the Lord reconfirms Moses as His preeminent servant and prophet. God does know what He is doing! What will we do? Will we get angry when things do not go our way or when things become difficult? I trust that *God Forbid*. You see *when the going gets tough the tough get going* and KS is a unit of the Elijah Generation – the generation of Messiah’s Return. Shabbat Shalom!