

# A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

*This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of the New West End United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam*

## PARSHAT BEHA'ALOSECHA

### DVAR TORAH: MOSHE TO YITRO – JOIN US IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL

The first time Moshe invites Yitro to join the people of Israel on the journey to the Promised Land, Yitro refuses and Moshe makes a second attempt. This time Yitro does not object and, according to most midrashim and commentators, eventually settled in the Land of Israel. But there doesn't seem to be much of a difference between Moshe's first invitation and his second. Why did Yitro finally agree?

Moshe first said: "Come with us and we will do good for you, for God spoke of the good He will do for Israel" (Bamidbar 10:29). Yitro then refused: "I will not go. Rather, I will go to my land and my birthplace" (Bamidbar 10:30). Then, in the next two verses, Moshe seems to repeat his request: "Don't desert us. You knew our encampments in the desert and were our 'eyes.' When you go with us, the good that God does for us we will share with you" (Bamidbar 10:30-31). True, the first sentence adds that Israel needs Yitro, but the last sentence sounds similar to Moshe's first attempt.

One fine but crucial distinction is pointed out by Rav Velvel Margolis, זצ"ל (1847-1935), served as a rof in Lithuania and later in Boston and New York – it appears in (פנינים משלחן גבוה). He cites the Vilna Gaon's answer to a difficulty in the Bilam story (Bamidbar 22). God at first does not allow Bilam to join Balak's messengers, but then seems to change direction and allow him. Why the switch? Says the Vilna Gaon: There is a difference between the two formulations. At first God says to Bilam **לא תלך עמהם** – don't go with them, using the word **עמהם** for "with them." **עמהם** implies uniting with them in spirit and mission. Later God uses a different expression; He says **קום לך אתם**, get up and go with them, using **אתם** for with them. **אתם** implies accompanying them physically without uniting with their mission.

In Moshe's first invitation he said to Yitro **לכה אתנו**, using the less unified **אתנו**, implying that Yitro will join them only on a physical level. We will share of the bounty of the Land of Israel with you. That didn't speak to Yitro, who wanted more. Moshe picked up on this and changed the formulation of his second invitation to **כי תלך עמנו**, when you join us spiritually as a complete partner, then (see the Kli Yakar) you will share in the spiritual benefits of the land of Israel and become one with our people. Yitro joined.

Akilas the wealthy and aristocratic convert challenged Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua (see Midrash Rabbah Bereishit 70:5) by asking, "This is the extent of the praise of the convert – **ואוהב גר לתת לו לחם** – **ושמלה**, God loves the convert to give him bread and clothing" (Devarim 10:18)?! Rabbi Yehoshua read between the lines and realized Akilas's concern. Akilas was asking whether a convert a full-fledged Jew or just a satellite joined to Israel. He answered with the following interpretation: The bread is Torah (see Mishlei 9:5) and the clothing is the mitzvah of tzitzit. And since the convert's daughters can marry Kohanim his grandchildren can serve in the Beit Hamikdash. Then the bread is the **לחם הפנים**, the showbread only eaten by Kohanim, and the clothing is the **בגדי כהונה**, the priestly garments. Like Yitro, Akilas did not want to suffice with a superficial attachment to the Jewish people but wanted to become 100% part of Israel's spiritual mission. He became a classic righteous convert and, teaches the Sifrei on our parshah, Yitro's descendants sat on the Sanhedrin.

# SOURCE GUIDE: PESACH SHENI – OPENING UP TO THE UNLIMITED

With a few alterations, the story of Pesach Sheni in Parshat Behaalotcha could easily have ended up without the holiday ever coming about. The Torah presents Pesach Sheni purely as a response to the impure men's request not to be left out of Israel's second national Pesach sacrifice. The Pesach Sheni opportunity – that one who is not able to offer the Pesach on the 14th of Nissan can offer it on the 14th of Iyar – does not appear along with the initial rules of Pesach in Parshat Bo. It is presented in the Chumash as a response to a human request and not, so to speak, part of the original set of rules. Had that request not be made or responded to, it sounds like there would have been no holiday called Pesach Sheni.

In other words: 1. Had the impure men not approached with their question, "Why should we lose out from offering the sacrifice to God along with the rest of the people of Israel?"; 2. had Moshe Rabbeinu not responded with, "Stand and I will hear what Hashem commands concerning you;" and 3. had Hashem responded differently – there would never have been a Pesach Sheni. **The Torah, through the Pesach Sheni narrative, teaches us about presenting a problem, responding to it, and solving it.**

## A. The Mens' Question

<p><b>1. Bamidbar 9:6-7</b>                  (6) There were men that were impure because of contact with a dead person and they were not able to perform the Pesach on that day; they approached Moshe and Aharon on that day.                  (7) Those men said to him, "We are impure because of contact with a dead person. Why should we lose out and not be able to offer God's sacrifice in its proper time amidst the children of Israel?"</p>	<p><b>במדבר ט:ו-ז</b>                  (ו) וַיְהִי אֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ טְמֵאִים לְנֶפֶשׁ אָדָם וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת הַפֶּסַח בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וַיִּקְרְבוּ לְפָנָי מֹשֶׁה וְלְפָנָי אַהֲרֹן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא :                  (ז) וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים הֲהֵמָּה אֵלָיו אֲנַחְנוּ טְמֵאִים לְנֶפֶשׁ אָדָם לְמַעַן נִגְרַע לְבַלְתִּי הַקְרִיב אֶת קֶרְבְּנֵךְ ה' בְּמַעְדוֹ בַּתּוֹדָה בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל :</p>
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Many in a similar position would never have presented their case to the authorities. The impure men could easily have folded up and said, 'What a shame we won't be able to offer the Pesach sacrifice along with everyone else.' They also could have said, 'We know what Moshe's going to say – we're unfit for the Korban.' But they would probably then have found themselves full of resentment. 'We became impure through doing one mitzvah (either carrying Yosef's bones to Israel for burial, carrying Nadav and Avihu from the Kodesh Kodashim, or burying someone who had no one else to tend to him), and end up losing out on a major national one through a technicality?!'

Instead, the men, who believed their motivation was sincere, and trusted they would get a fair hearing and a satisfying answer, vocalized their challenge. This demanded as much audacity as it did trust and faith. They voiced their challenge and were open to whatever Moshe might tell them. These men teach us the importance of coming forth with a question. Combining healthy chutzpah (in line with, "The timid one never will learn" – Pirkei Avot 2:5) with אמונת חכמים (trust in the wise) was the first step in making Pesach Sheni happen.

## B. Moshe's Response

<p><b>2. Bamidbar 9:8</b>                  (8) Moshe said to them: "Stand and I will hear what God commands concerning you."</p>	<p><b>במדבר ט:ח</b>                  (ח) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מֹשֶׁה עֲמְדוּ וְאֲשַׁמְעָה מַה יִּצְוֶה ה' לְכֶם :</p>
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It seemed to be an open and shut case: someone impure cannot offer a Korban Pesach. Moshe could easily have just said, "The Lord has already spoken. Too bad." He could have even consoled them with, "A good thought is considered like a good deed," or suggested that they offer a voluntary sacrifice when they become purified.

All of these would have been legitimate, but constricted. Moshe would have sufficed with his previous knowledge of the rules of the Pesach sacrifice and they would have come up against a brick wall. Moshe might have come up with a solution, but, as creative as it might be (see, for instance, the Sifrei's discussion about the suggestion that the impure men offer the Pesach sacrifice and others eat it), it could never have allowed those men to offer that year's Pesach sacrifice.

Moshe presented the case to Hashem, and opened up himself and the impure men to the limitlessness of Divine solutions. 'I've exhausted my abilities; let's see what Hashem says.' Moshe teaches us to bring God into the problem solving process. That way we can break out of the human limitations we might find ourselves stuck in.

### C. Hashem's Creation

<p><b>3. Bamidbar 9:9-15</b>            (9) God spoke to Moshe saying:            (10) Speak to the children of Israel saying, "When any man becomes impure because of contact with a dead person or he has too long of a way [to reach the place of the sacrifice], or [if these happen] to future generations, and they make a Pesach sacrifice to God.            (11) In the second month on the fourteenth day late afternoon they should make it; they should eat it with matzot and bitter herbs.            (12) They should not leave of it until the morning and should not break any of its bones. They should make it according to all the laws of the Pesach.            (13) But if a man who is pure and was not travelling refrained from making the Pesach his soul will be cut off from his people, for he did not offer God's sacrifice in its proper time; that man shall bear his sin.            (14) And if a stranger (convert) dwells among you and makes a Pesach to God, according to its laws and rules he should do it. There should be one law for you, for the stranger and for the native dweller in the land.</p>	<p><b>במדבר ט:ט-טו</b>            (ט) וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:            (י) דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אִישׁ אִישׁ כִּי יְהִי טְמֵא לְנֶפֶשׁ אוֹ בְדֶרֶךְ רְחֹקָה לָכֶם אוֹ לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם וַעֲשֵׂה פֶסַח לָהּ:            (יא) בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי בְּאַרְבַּעַת עָשָׂר יוֹם בֵּין הָעֲרֻבִים יַעֲשׂוּ אֹתוֹ עַל מַצּוֹת וּמְרִירִים יֹאכְלֵהוּ:            (יב) לֹא יִשְׁאִירוּ מִמֶּנּוּ עַד בֹּקֶר וַעֲצָם לֹא יִשְׁבְּרוּ בוֹ כְּכֹל חֻקַּת הַפֶּסַח יַעֲשׂוּ אֹתוֹ:            (יג) וְהָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הוּא טָהוֹר וּבְדֶרֶךְ לֹא יְהִי וְחָדַל לַעֲשׂוֹת הַפֶּסַח וּנְקֻתָהּ הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהִוא מֵעַמִּיהָ כִּי קָרַב ה' לֹא הִקְרִיב בְּמַעַדּוֹ חֻטְאוֹ יִשָּׂא הָאִישׁ הַהוּא:            (יד) וְכִי יִגוֹר אֶתְכֶם גֵּר וַעֲשֵׂה פֶסַח לָהּ כְּחֻקַּת הַפֶּסַח וּכְמִשְׁפָּטוֹ כִּן יַעֲשֵׂה חֻקָּה אַחַת יְהִי לָכֶם וְלַגֵּר וְלַאֲזֶרַח הָאָרֶץ:</p>
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Hashem is challenged by two impure men's sincere request to offer this year's Pesach sacrifice in way that seems to be against the Divine rules. Pesach has come; purification takes time; and the Pesach cannot be offered by an impure individual. Hashem is here being asked to create the impossible. But He does. Hashem creates a new Pesach for them. They can now offer the Pesach in its proper time, while pure, along with all of Israel. The solution is flawless, and even a Moshe could never have come up with it.

We find the same three elements – the courage and trust of the questioner, Moshe's responsiveness and humility, and Hashem's creation of a solution – in the daughters of Tzelafchad episode.

<p><b>4. Bamidbar 9:9-15</b>            (3) Our father died in the desert (the daughters of Tzelafchad say) and he was not among those who congregated against God in the Korach congregation, for he died of his own sin and he had no sons.            (4) Why should the name of our father lose out from within his family just because he has no son? Give us an inheritance among the brothers of our father.            (5) Moshe brought their case before God.            (6) God said to Moshe, saying:            (7) The daughters of Tzelafchad speak correctly. Surely give them an inheritance holding amidst the brothers of their father, and transfer their father's inheritance to them.</p>	<p><b>במדבר כז:ג-ו</b>            (ג) אָבִינוּ מָת בַּמִּדְבָּר וְהוּא לֹא הָיָה בְּתוֹךְ הָעֵדָה הַנוֹעֲדִים עַל ה' בַּעֲדַת קָרַח כִּי בָחֻטְאוֹ מָת וּבָנִים לֹא הָיוּ לוֹ:            (ד) לָמָּה יִגְרַע שֵׁם אָבִינוּ מִתּוֹךְ מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ כִּי אֵין לוֹ בֶן תִּנְהַל לָנוּ אֲחִיזָה בְּתוֹךְ אַחֵי אָבִינוּ:            (ה) וַיִּקְרַב מֹשֶׁה אֶת מִשְׁפָּטָן לִפְנֵי ה':            (ו) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:            (ז) כִּן בְּנוֹת צִלְפַּחַד דֹּבְרוּת נָתַן תִּתֵּן לָהֶם אֲחִזָּת נַחֲלָה בְּתוֹךְ אַחֵי אָבִיהֶם וְהִעֲבַרְתָּ אֶת נַחֲלַת אָבִיהֶן לָהֶן:</p>
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Pesach Sheni's creation and the story of the daughters of Tzelafchad have a lesson for us. Instead of drifting into hopelessness, cynicism, or resentment about the deadlocks in our lives, we should be willing to come forth and present our case to Hashem, and open ourselves up to Him creating for us the limitless new Divine framework that only He can.

## FAMILY MATTERS BY RABBI YEHOSHUA SEIDENFELD

The story at the end of our parshah, concerning Miriam speaking lashon hara about Moshe, seems straightforward. Rashi, quoting the Sifrei, explains that Tziporah, Moshe's wife, expressed sympathy with the wives of prophets, as their husbands would now separate from their wives, as did Moshe. Miriam reacts and says, "Did God only speak with Moshe? He also spoke with us."

While it may be easy to interpret Miriam's statement as a criticism of Moshe, in fact, it is the opposite. Miriam was not saying, 'We are also prophets and yet we continue to live with our spouses. Why does Moshe think he is more holy?' The Rambam, in Hilchot Tumat Tzaraat says that Miriam who raised Moshe and risked her life to save him would not speak disparagingly about Moshe.

So what was she saying? Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl שליט"א, quotes his father-in-law, Rav Chaim Zev Finkel, זצ"ל, the mashgiach of the Mirrer Yeshivah, who explains that Miriam was suggesting that she and Aharon should also take on the extra chumrah (stringency) of separation just like Moshe. She was not saying, 'Why can't he be like us?' Rather, she was saying, 'Shouldn't we be more like Moshe?' What is wrong with that, though? For this Miriam was punished with tzara'at plague? Shouldn't we all aspire to be like the great tsaddikim of our time?

The answer is that Hashem has a purpose and goal for everyone. Hashem did not want Miriam to be Moshe. Moshe was unique – לא קם בישראל כמשה. The Ramban includes remembering how Hashem punished Miriam in his listing of the 613 Torah mitzvot. It is one of the שש זכירות, the six remembrances that one should say every day. The lesson of Miriam is that even with the holiest of intentions we may not be on the appropriate level to adopt the lifestyle or routine of a great tsaddik, especially if it means sacrificing our relationship with our family.

This issue is dedicated in memory of  
Chanah bat Ephraim, ז"ל

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*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at [www.darchenoam.org](http://www.darchenoam.org) +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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