

TORAHSCOPE: BeHa'alotecha (When You Set Up)

by Mark Huey posted 13 June, 2008 www.outreachisrael.net

Numbers 8:1-12:16
Zechariah 2:14(10)-4:7

"Arise, O Lord!"

"Then it came about when the ark set out that Moses said, 'Rise up, O LORD! And let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You.' When it came to rest, he said, 'Return, O LORD, to the myriad thousands of Israel'" (Numbers 10:35-36).

BeHa'alotecha conveys a variety of information about the early days of the wilderness journey of Israel. From a description of use of the *menorah*, to amplification about the role of the Levites, to alternative Passover allowances, to following the cloud, to instructions about blowing the twin silver trumpets, to encampment movement procedures, to selecting seventy elders to distribute the workload, to the infamous incident where Moses is challenged by Aaron and Miriam, this portion is loaded with a wide variety of topics to consider. Each descriptive scenario contains additional insight about how the Lord was firmly molding this unique group of people into a nation for His own possession.

As I pondered each of these different situations, I was reminded that Israel has been set-apart to be a people of faith. I thought about how each of these distinctive events was handled when it occurred, but also reflected on how it would be considered each year as the Torah cycle is read through once again. The visual impressions of all of these activities came into my mind's eye as I journeyed back in time to the days of the trek to the Promised Land. As I considered each of these circumstances, I tried to place myself in among the masses, and contemplated how I would react to the various instructions.

For some reason, the proclamation that Moses declared prior to every wilderness departure and upon the ark's resting became a point of focus. This simple statement to, "Rise up, O LORD! And let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You," seemed to take on more significance this for me as the enemies of Israel have been especially vociferous in recent months and years. I thought about the ark and pictured the Kohathites (Levites) carefully lifting the ark and moving forward following the ubiquitous cloud that led the way. I compared these thoughts to the modern-day version of opening up a congregational ark and pulling the Torah scroll forth to be read. The comparison was not exactly overwhelming, but after further reflection I realized that my even knowing about what was happening in a traditional synagogue was, in itself, something to be very thankful for.

I began to realize that as a non-Jewish Believer in Messiah Yeshua, for the first time in countless generations, I was actually considering some of the tangible events that took place in the history of the infancy of Israel. All of a sudden, the document I was studying became very meaningful with instructions that, for God's purposes, have been preserved for over three thousand years. Certain procedures discussed began to take on more significance. The thought of actually participating in these activities became real. Application became more thought provoking than simply reading and theorizing about historical events. Then the thought came to me regarding my own personal application, and how obedient I must become to employ these instructions into my walk with the Holy One of Israel. After all, since the Lord has preserved these writings all of these years, perhaps something more than lip service and intellectual ascent should be considered.

Seven Pillars of Wisdom

At this point, I did some research about these two emphatic verses. I found it rather interesting. J.H. Hertz, the editor of *Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, states the following:

"These two verses are enclosed in inverted 'Nuns' to indicate either that they are not here in their original place (Talmud); or that they are taken from another source (possibly from 'the

Book of the Wars of the Lord', see 21:14) and form a distinct section, scroll, or even 'book' of the Torah. Some of the Rabbis held that the Book of Numbers consisted of three sections...and accordingly, they counted a total of seven books of the Torah. Thus, according to Rabbi Johanan, 'Wisdom hath hewn out her seven pillars' (Proverbs 9:1) referred to the 'Seven' books of the Torah."¹

After a little research into these things, I began to consider some of their conclusions. My challenge was not having a working knowledge of the Hebrew language. Of course, I have had enough Hebrew to be able to read the letters, so I went to my various copies of the Torah and the Tanakh and discovered that, in the source text, these two eighty-five letter verses were indeed separated from the text by the insertion of the two inverted *nuns* (נ) Then I checked out the passage in Proverbs and found the following:

"Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars" (Proverbs 9:1).

With my limited Torah and Hebrew knowledge, I have to conclude that the logic of the Rabbinical community had merit. I was not in a position to argue or debate their theories or conclusions. But as I thought about it more, I paused and went to my Teacher, the Comforter or Helper, for more instruction. After all, I remembered that Yeshua had given this simple promise to His Disciples at the end of His Earthly ministry:

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (John 14:26).

The Ark of Testimony

As I queried the Ruach about these verses concerning the movement of the ark, I was reminded of some of the previous teachings about the importance of the ark of testimony. In fact, the last verse of *Naso* concluded by indicating that it was from above the mercy seat, that was on the ark of the testimony, that the voice of the Lord spoke to Moses:

"Now when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim, so He spoke to him" (Numbers 7:89).

I was then reminded of passages in the Book of Joshua when the proper movement of the ark precipitated miracles similar to the Red Sea crossing (chs. 3-4). Joshua 6 reminds us of how the ark was instrumental in the destruction of the walls of Jericho. As we move forward in the history of Israel, the location of the ark is critical to receive the blessings of the Holy One. The Prophet Samuel heard the voice of God as he slept near the ark (1 Samuel 3:3). Later on, the ark's capture by the Philistines, and the glory departing Israel as a result of the loss, is described. The Philistines are judged by improperly withholding the ark (1 Samuel 6). Eventually, the ark is recovered and returned to Israel, but not without some dire consequences for some of the transporters (2 Samuel 6). Finally, the ark is placed in the Tabernacle provided by King David in Jerusalem, and King Solomon builds the First Temple that ultimately houses it.

As you recollect the recorded history of the ark of testimony, you are reminded of its significance in the life of Israel. After all, the tablets of the Ten Commandments, written by the very finger of God, are in the ark. These are the most tangible objects of the Creator's involvement with His people Israel:

"When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18).

When you realize that the ark contained these tablets of stone, you can more fully comprehend its significance. But as I considered that truth, I was reminded of some of the benefits that have been promised to and received by the followers of the Messiah of Israel. Jeremiah and Ezekiel describe some of the promises made and completed in the hearts of God's people:

"Behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers

¹ J.H. Hertz, ed., *Pentateuch & Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1960), 613.

in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,' declares the LORD. 'But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the LORD, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people'" (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

"And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God" (Ezekiel 11:19-20).

"Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances" (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

As you read these parallel passages, you should conclude that our old stony hearts have been removed and been replaced by hearts of flesh that have the Torah written upon them. In other words, New Covenant Believers in Yeshua will have the Torah written upon their hearts and have a new spirit—the Ruach HaKodesh—within them to lead them into all truth. This is where, upon confession of sin and true repentance, the seeker is born again from above with the Divine empowerment of the Holy Spirit now resident in his or her heart.

New Covenant Arks

As I reflected upon this new heart of flesh, the concept of our bodies being an ark of testimony for the Living God came to mind. After all, does not the Apostle Paul tell us that we are indeed temples of the Most High?

"Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

If we are physical temples who house the new hearts of flesh with the Torah written on them, maybe it would be prudent for us to employ some of the same techniques that Moses used as he followed the cloud. After all, are we not supposed to be led by the Spirit and walk by the Spirit? Is there a parallel between the cloud and the movement of the Holy Spirit?

"For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

Moses certainly knew that the enemies of the Holy One of Israel were everywhere, and that they hated everything that His people stood for and represented. Should we not know this same reality as Believers today? By faith, just prior to moving the ark, Moses declared the following words to establish his authority as imparted by the Ruach HaKodesh. First Moses cried out, "Arise O LORD!" summoning the Most High to take note that the ark was moving and he was looking to the Lord for protection and deliverance from Israel's enemies. Then Moses cries out, "And let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You."

With great authority, Moses calls upon God to establish who he is as he prepares the people to follow the cloud of the Most High. The Lord then clears a path for the movement of the ark so that the enemies of Israel would not be allowed to disrupt its transport. Apparently, this specific declaration had some profound impact in the movement of the ark.

As noted earlier, the inverted *nuns* definitely set these eighty-five letters and two verses apart for special notation throughout the ages. As earlier indicated, the Rabbinical scholars have adopted a number of theories. We know that traditional Judaism has continued to use these verses in the liturgy of the synagogues. Many in the Messianic community have also adopted these verses as they read the Torah portions. But is there perhaps another application for this declaration?

As "arks" of the Torah, are Believers employing these declarations for protection as the Spirit moves us from one location to another? We certainly know that we will be hated for our beliefs. Should we not know that our enemies are everywhere seeking to rob, steal, and destroy

everything that we stand for—and especially the Torah? Consider this, as it should be written on our hearts of flesh.

Perhaps if we believed that we were these precious arks, we would be more mindful of our responsibilities to protect ourselves from the wiles of the Devil and his minions. Then, in God's mercy toward us, He would complete the balance of these uniquely set-apart verses and return to us:

“When it came to rest, he said, ‘Return, O LORD, *to* the myriad thousands of Israel’ (Numbers 10:36).

Perhaps now as you set out on your way among the enemies of God, you will first be reminded, as this example shows, to declare these words by faith: **“Arise, O LORD! And let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You.”**

In so doing, you will remind yourself that you walk in the Spirit, are led by the Spirit, and are fully confident that the Holy One of Israel walks before you and scatters your enemies that are on your path!

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