

BeHa'alotecha (When you set up)

by Mark Huey posted 12 June, 2009 www.outreachisrael.net

Numbers 8:1-12:16

Zechariah 2:14(10)-4:7

"Prophets All"

"Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:29b).

As we look at this week's Torah portion we are directed to the continuing saga of the people of Israel and some of the trials and tribulations of their sojourn through the wilderness wanderings. Moses is given the design for the *menorah* or lampstand that is to be placed in the Tent of Meeting. This seven-branched candelabrum is to be formed from a single ingot of gold and is to illuminate the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant is located. Specific instructions are given for the Levites who have been deemed the equivalent of first born sons and dedicated to serve the Almighty. It is noted that the Torah obedient requirements for sojourners who have joined themselves to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are identical to the native born.

In one of the unique passages of the Torah, several verses that conclude Numbers 10 are actually set apart by two inverted Hebrew *nuns* (נ).¹ These are editorial markers that have been placed in the text by copyists to denote that this is something that needs to be paid attention to:

"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).

From these verses, we see that Moses foreknew that Israel's enemies would always be at odds with them and that it was critical for the Israelites to make these declarations in order to set a standard for moving the Ark of the Covenant. Some Jewish Rabbis have suggested that this couplet was another "book" of the Torah. But what we should take away from these verses is a sincere reverence for the Word of God and His awesome power. By remembering that God has the power to scatter our enemies, we entreat the Holy One to protect us and preserve us—as opposed to us relying on our own human strength.

Be'Ha'alotecha then turns to the incessant complaints of the Israelites and how the Lord dealt with their insurrection and demands for food and the culinary comforts of Egypt. The introduction of the quail for food and the response of Moses to the judgment that is meted out upon these recalcitrant people gives us a real sense of Moses' heart and love for them:

"So Moses said to the LORD, '**Why have You been so hard on Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all this people on me? Was it I who conceived all this people? Was it I who brought them forth, that You should say to me, "Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries a nursing infant, to the land which You swore to their fathers"?**' Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me, saying, "Give us meat that we may eat!" I alone am not able to carry all this people, because it is too burdensome for me. **So if You are going to deal thus with me, please kill me at once, if I have found favor in Your sight, and do not let me see my wretchedness**'" (Numbers 11:11-15).

At this point in the sojourn, Moses is ready to offer his life for the needs of his fellow Israelites. At this moment, the Lord interjects the methodology that He wants to help divide the leadership responsibilities among the seventy elders who are chosen for the continuation of the journey to the Promised Land:

"The LORD therefore said to Moses, '**Gather for Me seventy men from the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and their officers** and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you. Then I will come down and speak with you

¹ See Rudolph Kittel, et. al., eds., *Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1977), 231; and Aron Dotan, ed., *Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 213.

there, and I will take of the Spirit who is upon you, and will put *Him* upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you will not bear *it all alone*” (Numbers 11:16-17).

It is at this point in the narrative that God describes how the responsibilities of leadership in the camp of Israel are divided among the seventy elders. Interestingly, as you consider the requirements for leadership, you can read that Moses simply knew them to “have experience as elders and officers of the people” (NJPS):

“Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. They judged the people at all times; the difficult dispute they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they themselves would judge” (Exodus 18:25-26).

This is similar to, but not the same as, the time when earlier in the Book of Exodus Moses was challenged by his father-in-law, Jethro, to appoint the seventy judges to help distribute the burden of judging between the many disputes of the people. In these appointments of the judges, just like as the commissioning of the leaders of Israel, Moses is to choose individuals of the highest qualifications. The three principal criteria are listed in these terms: “men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe” (ESV):

“Now listen to me: I will give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people's representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God, then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do. **Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place *these* over them *as* leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens.** Let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will judge. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear *the burden* with you. If you do this thing and God *so* commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their place in peace” (Exodus 18:19-23).

Similar requirements are given by Paul in his instructions to Timothy about what qualifies an able deacon in the local assembly:

“Deacons likewise *must be* men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain” (1 Timothy 3:8).

It is interesting that Moses is commanded by God to appoint *seventy elders* over Israel. As we have seen in other places throughout the Scriptures that the number seventy has some very profound implications. According to the Jewish Rabbis, seventy represents the number of primary nations from which all the other nations of the world come. It is derived from the fact that when Jacob went into exile in Egypt, he took with him seventy souls who were in some way related to him:

“Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons *in all*, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven” (Deuteronomy 10:22-11:1).

You can see other references in the Bible where the number seventy is mentioned, and discover that in Numbers 7 it is the number of silver shekels that each of the different tribal leaders offered up to the Lord as the altar was being dedicated. You also discover that it represents some of the judgments that have been meted out upon Israel, such as the seventy-year Babylonian dispersion of the Southern Kingdom. Even in the days of Yeshua, He appointed seventy of His followers to go to spread the good news about the Kingdom:

“Now after this **the Lord appointed seventy others**, and sent them on before Him, two by two, to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. And He said to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest’” (Luke 10:1-2).

After Moses chose men that he knew, the Holy One then was able to pour out His Spirit upon them:

“So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. Also, he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people, and stationed them around the tent. **Then the LORD**

came down in the cloud and spoke to him; and He took of the Spirit who was upon him and placed *Him* upon the seventy elders. And when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do *it* again. But two men had remained in the camp; the name of one was Eldad and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them (now they were among those who had been registered, but had not gone out to the tent), and they prophesied in the camp. So a young man ran and told Moses and said, 'Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.' Then Joshua the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth, said, 'Moses, my lord, restrain them.' But Moses said to him, 'Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!' Then Moses returned to the camp, *both* he and the elders of Israel" (Numbers 11:24-30).

In an incredible display of God's grace toward His people, He places His Spirit upon the seventy elders who had been selected for leadership. As a result, these men began to prophecy and make declarations to the others in the camp. Apparently, as the account records, there were two who were chosen to lead, but did not attend the initial outpouring of the Spirit upon the other sixty-eight. All of a sudden within the camp, Eldad and Medad are found prophesying in the camp, and Joshua comes and reports this activity to Moses thinking that perhaps they were out of order.

The response of Moses is quite interesting as he admonishes Joshua for his concern. Moses already knew that God wanted the seventy to rule over Israel. By this time, after adhering to the advice of Jethro, he was already aware that by distributing the responsibilities of judging among the seventy, his impossible workload was lightened and made manageable. Now that the other responsibilities of leadership were going to be shared with seventy elders, Moses was delighted with the new administration. His declaration, "I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" (Numbers 11:29, NIV) indicates that he was desiring all of Israel to be in a position to prophecy or speak the truth with clarity.

This is, of course, what the Father desires for all of His children: **to speak the truth in love**. In the days following the Ascension of Yeshua, after the Holy Spirit took residence in the hearts of His followers, another administration is inaugurated that in many respects, reflects what was done in the wilderness journey. The Apostle Paul describes,

"And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Messiah; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Messiah. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Messiah" (Ephesians 4:11-15).

In this passage, Paul describes some of the offices of the *ekklēsia* and how they are to function in order to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. The goal of these leadership responsibilities is to attain the unity of the faith and to mature in our individual and corporate walks with the Lord. One of the critical aspects required for each of these leadership positions is the ability to speak the truth in love, and the only way to do this is by allowing the *agapē* love of the Holy Spirit to speak through us. This requires a person not only to be born again, but even more so committed to a life of holiness. Just like Moses desired that all of Israel would prophecy, or speak the truth inspired by the Holy Spirit, so too does Paul instruct that this will be evident in those who are chosen to lead the assembly of Believers.

The other Apostles also give us fair warning about the need to be able to discern what is truly prophecy or genuine words of the Spirit, and what is not. Peter, who was present on the Mount of Transfiguration when some significant declarations were uttered over Yeshua, warns his readers about the need to discern just what is truly a prophetic utterance and what is not:

"For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He

received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased'—and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. **So we have the prophetic word *made* more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God**" (2 Peter 1:16-21).

In this day and age, when we have been warned incessantly throughout the Scriptures that many false teachers and false prophets will arise to deceive the sheep, we need to be mindful of the imperative to check everything we hear through the grid of the Bible. This is why it is so critical that we establish a working knowledge of the Torah and all of the precepts, ordinances, laws and regulations that are written for our conduct. Here is a classic example to consider, because it is very clear that God Himself is going to send false signs and wonders to test His children, and determine if they are following Him or some other spirit:

"If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him" (Deuteronomy 13:1-4).

Imagine a statute of "the Virgin Mary" crying with actual tears coming from the stone or marble. To many, this sounds like a tremendous sign or miracle that one might even witness with his very own eyes. What is one to do, especially when the people who are showing you this sign are trying to impress you with their own interpretation of other things?

Well, the answer is quite simple. Since you as a Messianic Believer follow the Torah, you immediately feel a strong disturbance in your Spirit. You remember that the Lord prohibits us from making statutes or carved images to be used in worship:

"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth" (Exodus 20:4).

When you know that God does not permit graven images to be used for worship, you immediately discount this so-called "sign," knowing that it does not align with His Word. Knowing that the Holy One of Israel is the same yesterday, today, and forever, you realize that He would not show a sign that violates His own Word.

Can you think of any other examples of so-called "signs" that occur today and do not align with what we see in the Bible? Certainly there are many, and as you think about them you should begin to realize that such signs will become more treacherous. Future lying signs and wonders will become even more profound, and the need to know what the Torah says about these things will become even more critical for discerning what is from the Lord, and what is from another deceiving spirit.

Yeshua Himself warns His Disciples that false signs will be prevalent in the Last Days:

"For false messiahs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you beforehand. If therefore they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go forth, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner chambers,' do not believe *it*" (Matthew 24:24-26).

This is a stern warning that false messiahs and false prophets "will appear and produce great signs and omens" (NRSV) that will challenge the elect of God to discern from where these manifestations emanated. I would urge you to be aware as we are seeing many false signs and wonders that do not line up with the Torah, or any part of the Bible. For those of us who are reestablishing the foundational building blocks of our faith, we should know better. To others, we should issue forth warnings that these false signs might not fool them.

Finally, it is important to know that the testimony of Yeshua is the Spirit of prophecy. In the Book of Revelation, the fellow servant tells the Apostle John that it is the testimony of Yeshua, or the Word of God made flesh, who is indeed the Spirit of prophecy:

“And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said to me, ‘**Do not do that! I am a fellow slave of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Yeshua. Worship God! For the testimony of Yeshua is the spirit of prophecy**’” (Revelation 19:10).

If things do not line up with the written testimony of Yeshua, which means the Word of God, then we are not to believe them. This is why we need to know the Word and to inculcate it into our hearts and minds every day. Certainly, Moses desired that all would prophecy. But he also wanted all to be filled with God's Holy Spirit, who through them would do the prophesying. This is available today as we submit our wills to His will. As we seek to be led by the Spirit and walk by the Spirit, we can let His words come forth from our innermost being. May this be the testimony for one and all!

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