

Naso **Elevate** **Getting Ready to Move**

Torah: Numbers 4:21-7:89

Haftarah: Judges 13:2-25

Brit Chadashah: John 12:20-36

Reading: Marie p. 167 and Psalm 67. Jewish hero: the Maccabees. Torah Carrier: Art

The Torah portion deals with four themes: (1) What parts of the tent of meeting and the sanctuary which the various groups of Levites were to carry. The ark itself was to be covered by the Aaronites (never looking at it directly) and carried on their shoulders (taking turns when they got tired). (2) The Law of Jealousy. (3) The Nazirite Vow. (4) The offerings of the twelve princes.

The Haftarah portions deals with the birth of Samson and his call to be a nazirite from his birth, like John the Baptist. He gets a lot of bad press because he backslid with Delilah, but for much of his ministry he was agitated (moved) by the Spirit and ministered to the people. It was his being filled with the Spirit that was the most amazing thing about him, not his incredible strength – though when we are filled with the Spirit we can do mightier things than Samson did, because greater is He who is in us that he who is in the world.

In the New Testament portion, Yeshua prays to the Father because He knows that His time is coming and a mighty voice is heard from heaven, so that His apostles would know that what He was about to do had the Father's blessing. Too many people at that time had too narrow a view of the Messiah which was fractured and prevented them from seeing that Yeshua came in the fullness of time. He had a very difficult job to do, which He did even though no one understood what He was doing at the time. We need to discover what the Bible says about our glorious Messiah – hence my first summer series.

There is a great deal of misunderstanding about the meaning of the animal which the Bible calls tachash. The skins of this animal formed the rain proof covering over the sanctuary and many English Bibles translate the word as either a badger or a porpoise. My French translation says it was a dolphin. The Talmud goes further and says that this animal was a special kind of now extinct antelope which had a rainbow coloured hide.

In the introduction to the second giving of the Law, Moses warned the people not to add to or subtract from the Bible (Deut. 4:2). The word in Hebrew it is a general one which indicates an antelope like animal. It had to be a kosher animal and the real question to be asked is why they used the hides of a wild animal, when they had so many domestic animals to choose from. A question for Yeshiva Bible Study.

Numbers 4:27 said that each of the levitical families carried that which the L-rd assigned to them. How about you? Are you carrying what the L-rd has assigned for you to carry in our congregation? We are the temple of G-d, both individually and corporately and each of us and all of us have duties which the L-rd empowers and gifts us to perform, however simple or complicated this may be.

My prayer is that each of us and all of us will find our place of service in our community because there is a place for everybody in our community.

The Law of jealousy was designed to make sure that marital strife was dealt with quickly and that, when a woman was falsely accused of unfaithfulness, she could be vindicated before the whole assembly. Some have speculated that if she was guilty, her metabolism would react to the special drink and that if she were innocent, it would not disrupt her metabolism. There was no magic formula that would only work on someone with a guilty conscience, it was the hand of the L-rd which would either smite her if she were guilty and exonerate her if she was innocent. There was no magic involved, just the hand of the L-rd intervening.

The nazirite vow was given so that from time to time, people could come apart (be separate – which is what the word means) and seek the L-rd for an unspecified amount of time. They would shave all the body hair, and so cover themselves up for the duration of their vow. The hair which grew during this time, was shaved off at the completion of their time and was offered to the L-rd as something holy. This is the only time when human hair was burnt before the L-rd.

The twelve princes each made a special, specific set of offerings, each on the day which was set aside for them. It took twelve days, likely because what they gave had to be sanctified and offered to G-d, had to be offered up with the sacrificial animals which formed part of the process. A total of 252 animals were sacrificed over 12 days, so that the people would know that what their princes had offered was holy and now belonged to the L-rd.

It was a protracted community effort where that which was ordinary became holy when it was dedicated to the L-rd. They were getting ready to move, so that they would camp in the right order, and each of the Levites would carry what they were assigned to carry. The camp was to be holy and the people were to walk in holiness, because it was only as they did that the holy L-rd was going to be able to move with them and dwell in their midst.

May we have the same commitment to our community effort, so that each of us carries what is assigned to us, so that the L-rd can walk in our midst as we grow and prepare to become a generationally sustainable, dynamic group of Jews and Gentiles, walking in harmony together according to His Word and filled with His Spirit.

Sermon: Our Glorious Messiah: Isaiah 9:6 Wonderful (Pele)

There are some 320 references to our Messiah in the Tenach (Torah, Prophets and Holy Writings), but I have selected one of the most concise and precise descriptions of who He is, so that we do not fall into the trap of not recognizing Him fully for who He fully is. Isaiah 9:6 both says that a child is born unto us and a son is given to us. He then goes on to give five declarations of Messiah's divinity, five being used in Hebrew when you want to say that something is for sure and certain beyond any possibility of doubt.

Rashi, one of the great commentators of the Talmud, did his best to downplay this passage, and while he did not dare alter the Hebrew, he altered the way he felt we should understand the Hebrew, even though what he says is not what the Hebrew says.

He said that the passage should be understood to read as follows. “The child and son who was given to us, came in the name of the Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty G-d and Everlasting Father and shall be called the Prince of Peace”. Be careful of those who come up with understandings of what the Bible says, but which do not say what the Bible actually says.

Modern Judaism operates under the false assumption that the Torah and other passages of the Bible have hidden meanings which lurk below the surface of the actual words of the text. By this kind of reasoning, the face value meaning of the Bible is only the skin or the husk and the true meaning lies somewhere beneath the surface. Our Torah portion for this week reminds us not to add to or subtract from the what was given to us in the wording of the text.

I may not always understand how the everlasting Father and Mighty G-d came among us as a child and a son, but I need to admit that this is what the Bible clearly teaches and no other, lesser vision of the Messiah adds up to what the Bible actually says about Him. Just as Moses supervised the building of the ark and the Tabernacle, in order that the mighty presence of G-d could dwell in the midst of His people – so that He could tabernacle amongst His people – in much the same way, the Spirit of G-d came upon Mary so that a tabernacle of flesh could be built for our Messiah to dwell in, as He tabernacled in our midst for 33 years.

It is a mystery which can be partially explained, that the whole of the created cosmos is not big enough for the glory of G-d to fit into, but all the fullness of G-d is found in every molecule and this same fullness indwelt the body of our Messiah during His time on earth. In a very real way also, He indwells our hearts by faith, but not in the same way as the fullness of G-d dwelt in our midst through our beloved Messiah.

He became a man and faced the same temptations and trials which we all face and He won where Adam and Eve lost, not because He was the incarnate fullness of G-d, but because He took and tamed Adam's flesh and lived a spotless life free of sin and offered the only perfect sacrifice for the sins of mankind and won everlasting life for all the nations and generations of mankind. He was victorious over the flesh, the world and the devil and as He indwells us, He can be our spiritual coach to teach us to live in victory as He lived in victory. Are you letting Him be your spiritual coach and spiritual fitness trainer? Greater is He who is in us, then the one who is in the world.

The first term used in this fivefold description of the Messiah's perfect divinity, is the Hebrew word: ***Pele*** which is translated as wonderful in English and admirable in French. The term actually means worthy of worship and also beautiful beyond description. If you were to take the magnificent testimony which the heavens give to the glory of G-d, even this description would pale in comparison to the actual wonderful wonder of G-d in our blessed Messiah.

He alone is worthy of worship, especially since we are forbidden to worship the creation instead of the Creator. He shines brighter than the sun and nothing in the created universe is as amazingly worthy of worship as He is. We are created in His image, but that just means we were created to be mirrors intended to reflect back to Him the wonder and glory of who our G-d is. How good a mirror are you for the glory which dwells in your heart through faith? We never become part of the deity, our part is to be eternal reflectors of this glory.

Now before we go any further, I want to state categorically that the triune nature of G-d is a Jewish concept, firmly fixed in the Scriptures, from Genesis through to the Revelation. G-d is always presented as a plural singularity, indivisibly One, in three distinct persons. How can this be? This is the wrong question. We should be saying this is, what the Scriptures teach and this is what we should uphold as true, authentic monotheists.

You see G-d is frequently called ***echad*** (a composite unity) and never ***yichad*** (a singular unity).

And when the wonder of the virgin's baby begins to be described, He is first called worthy of worship – not as part of the Creation (which we are not to worship), but as the incarnation of the Creator, whom we are commanded to worship.

This does not indicate a physical beauty, because the Scriptures say that He had no beauty that we should desire Him and that He was despised and forsaken of men. The Talmud actually says that people could not accept Yeshua of Nazareth as the Messiah because He was short, ugly, covered in freckles with big ears. It is probably just negative propaganda, but don't forget, David was short.

He convinced 500 people that He was the Messiah of promise and when the apostles asked Him to show them the Father, He answered that He had been among them for so long and yet they did not recognize Him as the Father in their midst. It was never His physical appearance that was the manifestation of G-d, any more than the tabernacle was the physical manifestation of G-d.

It was constructed to symbolically represent the eternal wonder and beauty of the invisible presence of the Almighty. In the same way, the body of Yeshua was the Father's fleshly tabernacle while He dwelt among us and because of that dwelling, the Messiah is worthy of worship because He is G-d who dwelt in our midst.

How could the fullness of G-d dwell in the flesh of one man and yet also indwell every molecule of the cosmos? In Colossians, Paul describes the Messiah as the glue which holds the cosmos together, so in a way, which defies our ability to explain, He both fully indwelt the physical body of our Messiah, as well as being present in every molecule of the universe.

You need to understand that the word for Mystery in Greek, indicates a thought so big and complex that your head would explode if you tried to think it. The hard drive of your brain is not equipped in this life to handle the mighty truths which shall be revealed to us in the life which is to come. Now this does not mean that we should give ourselves over to all kinds of mysteries and strange ideas, like those which have kept popping up in both Judaism and Christianity (and even in Islam). Mysteries which are not set forth in the pages of the Holy Scriptures do not come from G-d and we should waste our time exploring them.

Those who claim to explain the mysteries of G-d's Word by giving details which are not found in the Word of G-d, are in fact charlatans and false prophets. G-d's Word is a fire and a hammer and we should never take our words and present them as the words of G-d, unless we want to be found out as liars and deceivers, who are not rightly handling the Word of truth and who have presumptuously gone beyond that which was written.

Anyone who claims special revelation which claims to go beyond what the Bible says, sets themselves up above the Word of G-d and will be cast down as forcefully and fully as both Nebuchadnezzar and the Prince of Tyre were. No one should try and set their throne above G-d, or even next to G-d and no one should ever claim to be G-d or a manifestation of G-d unless they truly are. Messiah is truly the manifestation of G-d in the flesh.

No one in the history of creation has ever had this honour, except G-d Himself, when He tabernacled among us in the body which grew in Mary's womb. In Acts 20:28, Luke says that the church was bought with G-d's own blood and this is the blood which our Messiah shed on

the cross.

The early church struggled to understand the triune nature of G-d and the term “trinity” was coined. This word means three in one, never three separate gods acting in unity as a team. Orthodox Judaism accepts the full deity of Messiah but struggles to explain how this can be. The Orthodox Christian churches have a flawed idea of the oneness of G-d, because they misunderstand some Scriptures which say the Father is not subject to the Son – how could He be, if they are one in the same.

They went as far as to altar the Nicene creed and say that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and not from the Son. They also elevate Mary to the status of ***theotokos***, divine and somehow also part of the godhead. The Roman Catholics call her the co-redemptrix (co- redeemer), which is just about the same thing, because this teaching says that you can come to G-d through Mary, without going through the Son, because her sufferings can also save us.

Rather than go into more detail about some of the other wild and wonderful departures from divine truth which is taught in the Bible, let me just say that anything which claims to be divine truth and which is not taught in the Bible, is not divine truth, but human heresy.

The triune nature of G-d does not fall into this category. As a young believer, I had trouble getting my head around the trinity of G-d, but those who were training me specified that there is a big difference between understanding what the Bible teaches and recognizing what the Bible teaches. What is taught in the Scriptures must be accepted by faith.

The trinity of G-d is firmly rooted in the revealed Scriptures and though they deny it, it is firmly rooted in Judaism, and can be found in the Talmud and in the mystical language which Judaism uses to describe what G-d is like.

Isaiah 9:6 teaches two main concepts. First that a child who is a son is given to us. And second that this son child, is G-d Almighty Himself dwelling in our midst. If we believe that nothing is impossible with G-d, then we can take comfort that the trinity of G-d falls into this category. The first of the five descriptions starts out by saying that He ***Pele***, which means that He is both beautiful beyond description and totally worthy of worship, because He is G-d.

And since Jews are forbidden to worship anyone or anything which is not the only true G-d, Messiah is true G-d of true G-d. We are to have no other gods before G-d. We are not to bow down and worship anything or anyone but G-d and yet the son child who was given to us is worthy of worship. This is because He is true G-d of true G-d.

The nature of G-d is oneness that is indivisible and is an echad – a plural singularity (or a singular plurality). There are not many gods (polytheism) and creation itself is not god (pantheism). Who G-d is, is described in the Bible both forcefully and clearly in terms which leave us full of awe and mystery.

I cannot fully explain the wonderful mystery of the triune nature of the plural singularity which is G-d. The best I can do is to admit that this is how G-d is described in the Bible and accept it as a wonderful teaching where G-d so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that whosoever believes in Him (as the full manifestation of G-d in the Son), should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Over the summer, I want to go through Isaiah's description of the Messiah and at the same time, deal with some talmudic departures from what the Bible says about our Glorious Messiah. My goal is that we would be overcome with awe when we realize how wonderful our Messiah is as the full manifestation of G-d in the flesh. And it is because He is fully G-d, that He can do exceedingly above all that we can think or ask.

His blood was shed as the blood of G-d to pay for our sins and grant us everlasting life. He lives forever and He has always lived from the beginning. How can this be? Search me, but this is what the Scriptures teach and any other understanding of the Messiah is flawed because He is first **Pele** and Isaiah goes on to describe four more characteristics of His singular deity as Emmanuel (G-d among us).

Don't settle for anything less than what the Bible teaches and never put the words of men above the Word of G-d. A mystery by definition exceeds our ability to explain it. The very universe in which we live is a mystery not even the most arrogant scientist claims to fully understand (not even David Suzuki) and yet no one denies that it is real and does what it does, even when we do not understand it.

Again, understanding what the Bible teaches is not the same as understanding that the Bible teaches many things which are either hard or impossible to understand. Some sincere believers are not trinitarian and I understand where they are coming from. I do not agree with them, because I would rather stand on what the Bible teaches, even if I do not fully understand it, than accept people's attempt to change what the Bible says and make it say something which they find more acceptable.

I look forward to many fruitful discussions over the summer and we will make time to discuss this and other issues during our weekly yeshiva. You can also email me your questions. I am only allowed a flip phone, so texting me your questions might not be feasible, but I will always do my best to help you understand what the Bible teaches, even as we learn to leave the secret things to G-d and focus our energy on putting His teachings in to practice in our daily lives. Messiah is **Pele**, and as such is totally worthy of our worship because He is G-d.

May G-d, the Father, the Messiah and the Holy Spirit, bless you and give you a spirit of understanding and faith (and strength and perseverance) as you grow in the grace and knowledge of our blessed Redeemer and Messiah. Shabbat shalom.