

Beha'alotcha	In Your Making Go up	A glorious, Bumpy Beginning
Torah:	Numbers 8:1-12:6	
Haftarah:	(Zechariah 2:10 [14]-4:7) I mistakenly listed these last week	
Brit Chadashah:	(Revelation 11:1-19) O mistakenly listed these last week	

Our passage begins with Moses putting the finishing touches on the menorah, which is the final piece of tabernacle furniture. But, as with all the furnishings and the buildings and the veil, he did all according to the instructions he had received from the L-RD. The menorah was complete and ready for service.

Next, the Levites were finally separated from the people and consecrated to the L-RD. They would now camp around the courtyard of the Tabernacle and prevent anyone from accidentally wandering into the lethal presence from which the people had to keep a ritual distance. They were first sprinkled with atonement water, which we learn later on, was made with the ashes of the Red Heifer. They then shaved off all their body hair and washed their clothes. It had to be a totally new beginning.

Two bulls were brought for their consecration, one for the atonement offering and the other for the burnt offering. The entire assembly of the people gathered for the consecration ceremony. All of the people laid hands on the Levites (must have taken a while) and Aaron made them turn back and forth like a wave offering to the L-RD. The Levites themselves also lay hands on both bulls, which are then offered on their behalf. In the place of the first born sons, the Levites were to act as servants of the Aaronic priests and serve in the courtyard of the tent of meeting.

They served actively from 25 to 50 years old. After that, they would just help and not actually offer any of the sacrifices. Just before the people set out on their first journey from the mountain, on the fourteenth day of the first month of the second year, they celebrate their first ritual (remembrance) Seder. It was to be celebrated from sunset until full dark, where the sun had completely set. They followed the rituals flawlessly, but two groups of people were potentially excluded from the Seder: those who were ritually impure because of contact with a dead person and those who were traveling.

To accommodate them, a second Seder could be celebrated on the 14th day of the second month (Pesach Sheni). In both scenarios, no bones were to be broken and nothing was to be left until the morning. Any strangers residing in their midst had to follow all the stipulations because the same law which applied to the people, also applied to the stranger.

The camp was protected by a fiery cloud at night and as long as it hovered over the tabernacle, they were to stay put, whether it was two days, a month or a year. In preparation for their first move, two silver trumpets were forged. When just one sounded, just the leaders were to gather before Moses. If the two sounded (loudly) all the people were to gather to Moses and get into their marching order.

The Aaronites were to be the trumpeters of the silver trumpets. Once they were in the land, two blasts called them to war. The silver trumpets (and shofars) were to be sounded on the days of joy, at festivals (the Sabbath) and at the new moon. The trumpets were sounded to remember the voice of YHVH from the mountain top and when

they were sounded, they were always followed with burnt offerings and thanksgiving offerings. The Talmud supposes that these trumpets were hidden away after Moses died and no one knows where they are. Another unsubstantiated legend. They were likely kept with the tabernacle and then in the temple once it was built. They were probably taken by the Babylonians as they burned the temple, because we never hear of them again.

Then, oh glory, on the 21st day of Iyahr, of the second year, the cloud lifted, the trumpets sounded and the people moved for the first time. They had two campsites before they reached the staging place for their entrance into the land. But their first campsite was not a success. It has two names, Taberah (burning) and Kibroth-Hattaavah (grave of coveting). When they first arrived the people may have complained about the amount of work setting up their first camp and hung around the edges of the camp, instead of helping to set up. These slackers were burned and no one ever complained about the take down and set up again.

There is also a minor concern with the marching order. The Levites traveled in between banners one and two and between banners two and three, with the banner of Dan serving as a rear guard. The first group of Levites, the Gershonites and Merarites dismantled the tabernacle after the Aaronites had come in to wrap up the ark and other holy furniture not for public viewing. The Aaronites led the procession, carrying the ark as the cloud hovered over it.

When they arrived at their new camp site, the first two groups of Levites would assemble the Tabernacle and once the veil was in place, the Ark was unwrapped, without anyone actually laying eyes on it. Next, the Kohathites set up and dismantled the courtyard and most of their stuff traveled in special ox drawn carts. They walked for three days before the Tabernacle was set up again, with the hovering fiery cloud warning off any potential marauders at night. Once the sanctuary and the courtyard were all set up again, the some more trouble started.

At this camp, when the people recovered from the burning, the mixed multitude craved meat, likely because they did not possess as many animals as the native born Jews. They expressed dissatisfaction with the diet of manna and wanted something else to sink their teeth into, without decimating what little herds they had. Moses had a mini meltdown when he considered the heavy task of getting enough meat for that many people. He then asks the L-RD to kill him, but instead, one of the first mentions of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurs. It was the season of Shavuot and the Lord took of the Spirit which was on Moses and put it on the 70 elders, who then prophesy. An Upper Room in the wilderness!

The 70 then go outside the camp and tell the people that G-d will give them enough meat for a whole month in a single day. The wind blows in quail, who drop exhausted for one day's journey on either side of the camp to a depth of two meters. The greedy people rushed out to gather the birds before they recovered and flew away. Those who gathered the least, gathered around 1900 birds each for a total weight of meat of some 200 kilos. As they were gorging, because of their lust, the L-RD struck them with a plague and many died.

Once they cleaned up the camp, it was time to move to the staging point for their entrance into the Holy Land, but they made one more stop along the way and set up their second camp at a place called Hatseroth. Place names in the Bible often had two or three names and once there, the next problem comes from the leadership and not from the people.

Miriam criticizes Moses for talking a Cushite or Ethiopian wife. Before we get into her severe punishment, let me rule out some traditional nonsense I encountered. Some of the rabbis feel that this woman is Moses' wife Zipporah who is given the name Cushite because she is so

beautiful that her knickname was Cushite or ugly. This is utter nonsense. He married a beautiful black woman, either as a second wife or to replace Zipporah, who may have died.

For this expression of racism (who does Moses think he is, marrying a black woman), Miriam is called to the entrance of the tent of meeting and is given a personal dressing down by YHVH. She becomes totally white with leprosy. At this time, the people of the Middle East were olive skinned and not blond haired or blue eyed. She stays in seclusion outside the camp for seven days and then she is healed.

Moses was a very patient man, but when his big sister crossed the line, YHVH stepped in and asked her and Aaron, who they thought they were criticizing their brother for a perfectly legitimate decision. We learn later that Aaron also had a dark skinned grandson (Pinhas or Phineas – which is an Egyptian name for person of colour).

They haven't had a very good time at their first two camps and it seems to be taking them a long time to get things sorted out. Once Miriam recovers, they move to their third camp, which is the staging point for their glorious entrance into Canaan – or so they thought. We cannot continue to walk with G-d unless we learn to walk with Him according to the stipulations of His Word. How is your walk? Any complaining or hanging round the edge of the community, not wanting to help or get involved? Are you making invalid criticisms of people when they make valid choices? Racism of any kind is a leprosy which we do not want to infect our happy home with. But you'll have to wait for next week, to hear about their biggest disaster.

Sermon: First Summer Series: Open My Eyes

Passage: “ *Then He said to them: this is what I said to you, while I was still with you. It is necessary that all that is written of Me in the Law in Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms, be accomplished. Then He opened their spirit, in order that they would understand the Scriptures.* (Luke 24:44, 45)

This was a fairly tall order, since there are over 400 prophecies about Yeshua in the Scriptures which take us from He pre-existence, His earthly ministry (including His death and resurrection), right up to His glorious return when He will bring the world to an end. The concept of the Messiah was never a pagan Greek concept which was imposed by Christians on the Hebrew Scriptures. Everything about Him derives entirely from the Hebrew Scriptures.

Before the New Testament was canonized, early believers relied on the Greek Septuagint when they quoted from the Old Testament. At first, this was not a problem, not just because most Jews spoke Greek, but also because most Jews considered it the best translation of the time. It was translated by a committee of some 70 rabbis, working in Alexandria, Egypt. Greek was then considered one of the holy languages of Judaism, along with Hebrew and Aramaic.

The problem came when the rabbis were upset because Messianic believers were successfully using this translation to demonstrate that the claims of Yeshua were valid and Scriptural. They wanted to come up with a new Hebrew translation, which altered the wording of many Messianic passages, to make it harder for believers to demonstrate their claims.

It took them a long time, but by the seventh century they had come up with what is called the Masoretic Hebrew translation and which altered many passages from the Septuagint which were used to demonstrate that Yeshua was indeed the Messiah. Most modern Protestant and Evangelical translations use the Masoretic text as the basis for their translation of the Old Testament.

So, even today when there is a difference between New Testament quotes from the Old Testament and what they say in the Masoretic text, we should accept the older and more precise Septuagint as our guide. The Masoretic translations was hailed as a correction of the older Greek Septuagint. Some Jewish sources even claim that it was a Christian translation, which it is not. A new text which claims to correct an older text, needs to have an even older text before it can justify making any adjustments in the newer text.

Some translations were used by the Masoretic scholars, but none of the variations they made of what the Septuagint said, were found in any earlier Hebrew or Aramaic translations. Now the study of how the texts of the Bible were translated and transmitted until they got to us, can be both fascinating and confusing because all languages change a lot over time.

After our people came back from Babylon, they used the Aramaic alphabet even for things which they still wrote in Hebrew. Around this time, both Aramaic and Greek were eclipsing Hebrew as a spoken language. Hebrew was still considered a sacred language but fewer people used Hebrew as a spoken language or understood what it said when the Hebrew text was read to them. More and more Jews spoke Koine (common) Greek. From the time of the return from Babylon to our modern era, Jews spoke the languages of the people they lived amongst and in many cases even developed their own dialects of many of these languages.

There is no indication that the New Testament was first written in Hebrew or Aramaic (or even Syriac) and then later translated into Koine Greek. Koine Greek was the language most Jews understood and while the Torah was still read in Hebrew, it frequently had to be translated for the majority of the people to understand it. The usage of Koine Greek was on the rise while these other three languages were on the decline.

We still see some Aramaic words in the New Testament and Paul addressed the mob in the temple in Hebrew when they were rioting against him. He probably did this to show that he was indeed Jewish and since the temple was a holy place, he spoke to them in the language which they considered to be the most holy. Most Jews spoke Greek or Aramaic until these languages ceased to be international languages. They were still considered holy but the people communicated among themselves in whatever language was used in the country where they sojourned.

Today, Aramaic is only spoken by a small group of Assyrian Christians, but for nearly a thousand years Greek was the Middle Eastern equivalent of Eastern European Yiddish, which is now disappearing as Israel has revived Hebrew. But until very recently, more Jews spoke English than they did Hebrew.

So the early disciples would have conversed in a mixture of Koine Greek and Aramaic, with Greek on the increase and Aramaic diminishing. The Koine Greek of the New Testament even has some Hebrew sentence structures and some Hebrew and Aramaic words. The New Testament was written in the language which most Jews understood, which was Koine Greek. Koine Greek was not a foreign, non-Jewish language which the original New Testament was translated into at a later date. The oldest manuscripts of the New Testament are in Koine Greek, which was the international dialect of Greek which Jews understood and which most Jews used. There are still some isolated tiny pockets of people who still use this dialect of Koine Greek, mainly in some mountain villages of Southern Italy.

Where does that leave us? Both our Koine Greek New Testament and our Hebrew Old Testament are reliable documents, even with the many changes which the Masoretic translation made to discredit the Septuagint. You see, the Septuagint was a translation made by a group of Greek speaking rabbis in the third century B.C.E., while the Masoretic translation was a Hebrew translation made much later, in the seventh century C.E. The older text is usually considered to be more authentic and authoritative, unless an even older text emerges. Changes made in the newer translation should be rejected, so when the New Testament quotes the Old Testament differently than the Masoretic text, the New Testament translation is the correct one. It does not happen very often and usually only when the Messiah is being spoken about.

There are two ways of dividing up the Old Testament. It can be done either by author or by contents. Neither way adds or subtracts anything. It is just presented differently. You see, there were so many confusing and contradictory things being taught about the Messiah, that Yeshua wanted the apostles' understanding to be based solely and completely on the Old Testament. And it should be the same for us today. We need to look at the New Testament as a Messianic Jewish Koine Greek commentary on the Old Testament (Law, Prophets and Psalms).

You see, you cannot really understand the Messiah unless you understand the Scriptures and you cannot really understand the Scriptures until you know what they say about our Messiah. But how do we know that these ancient manuscripts have not been significantly altered as they were passed on and translated into so many languages? When it comes to the New Testament, there are around 400,000 variant readings in the thousands of manuscripts we possess. Of this great number only around 500 affect the meaning of the text and only around 40 actually change the meaning of the text. Everywhere this happens, you can cross reference with other portions of the New Testament, so that the original meaning is never lost.

These variants are the human finger prints of the New Testament which tell us who translated it where and when they translated it. What comes down to us in the unaltered divine content with only .0004% of it changed. Not even Ivory Soap is that pure.

When it comes to the Old Testament, when the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered, the only book which survived intact was the Book of Isaiah, which has about 27,000 words (give or take). When the King James translation of Isaiah was compared to the one found among the Dead Sea scrolls, after a 1500 year gap, only seven words were different which means that only around .0007% has been altered. It too has come down to us as an entirely reliable guide to faith and practice. When you use a modern academic translation, what you read is functionally equivalent to the originals.

Well lets have a brief, selective look at what the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms say about of Messiah. Though there are around 400 references to choose from, I have selected thirteen references which give a very clear picture of the Messiah from Nazareth. Genesis 3:15 says that He will be born as the seed woman, even though women do not usually have any seed without the help of a man. Genesis 12:2 says that as part of the great nation, the Messiah will be a great blessing to all nations. Genesis 49:10 says that the scepter will not depart permanently from Judah, until Messiah comes. Messiah was born before the last Jewish king of Judah was dethroned.

Numbers 24:17 calls Him a star who will pierce the sides of His enemies, and which will happen when He returns. Deut. 18:18 calls Him the Word Incarnate who we had better listen to. The Prophet Isaiah says that He will be born to a virgin maiden who has not yet had any physical relations with a man. Isaiah also uses a five fold declaration to describe Messiah's deity (Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty G-d, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace- ch. 9:6,7). Later, Isaiah makes a stunningly clear reference to the trinity (I, YHVH, who am the beginning and the end have been here since the very beginning and now Adonai YHVH sends Me with His Spirit (Ch. 48:12-16). In a very real sense, G-d sent Himself.

Isaiah also sings a song about the Divine Suffering Servant (Ch. 52:13 to 53:1-12). Psalm Two warns us to revere the Divine Son, who, though He is pierced (and died – Ps. 22:17), His flesh is not allowed to rot (Ps. 16:10). David records that YHVH says to His Adonai to sit at the right hand until His enemies are made into a foot stool. I haven't gone into the poetry and symbolism of Zechariah, Daniel or the Minor Prophets. I leave this to you!

But before we move on, I am blown away by what the Aaronic priest, Ezekiel (Ch. 1:10), says about the four faces of Messiah, and which is also reflected in the Revelation (Ch. 4:7). As the lion, He is the King. As the calf, He is the Servant. As the man, He is human and as the eagle, He is also divine. He also has His seven fold ministry: He came, He lived, He died, He was buried, He rose from the dead, He ascended back into Heaven, from where He will return at the end of the world.

We do not have an exhaustive account of Yeshua's life, but it is selectively complete (John 20:30. 31 and 21:25) and sometimes there are details which are not given (Deut. 29:29). There are some 400 Books which are missing from the Old Testament and several, which are missing from the New Testament. But no essential content is missing and our Bibles remain the only authoritative Standard for measuring truth which claims to come from G-d.

Paul warned Timothy against those who would try and preach another Gospel, full of false legends and futile traditions. There are even those workers of evil who will try and deconvert us, I know this because I used to be one.

We need to have our spirits open to what the Bible actually teaches about our Messiah. We need to give ourselves over to the reliable content which the Scriptures teach. We need to avoid the unscriptural and unscrupulous, carnal content, which men who hate the Messiah and the Scriptures, may try to foist upon us. We do not need their foolish legends and vain traditions which do not come from our earthly version of the perfect, complete Bible which resides in Heaven. Evolutionism is the most colossal, deception of these which was ever invented. It is nothing more than resurgent paganism and has no basis in observable reality.

Are you letting our Messiah open your spirit to what the Scriptures say about Him as you avoid the lies and tricks of the enemy of our souls? It is a lot to take in but is well worth the effort. Shabbat Shalom and Shavua Tov.