

BEHAALOTHECHA 1981

In the Torah portion Behaalothecha we have many different things. They do not all seem to fit together. At the end of the Torah portion we learn how Moshe Rabbeinu becomes exasperated with the people. He wants to quit. The people had come to him asking for meat. They had manna. They were well fed. The manna, the Rabbis teach us, would taste like anything they wanted it to taste like. However, the people were not satisfied. Moshe loses patience entirely with them and he said to G-d, "Why did You do evil to Your servant to put the burden of all this people on me? Am I a nursemaid that I should carry them in my bosom?" This is hard to understand. Why was Moshe so angry? This was the same Moshe who had interceded with G-d for the Jewish people asking that G-d forgive them for the Golden Calf and for the incident of the spies and yet here he loses complete confidence in them. Why should this be so? Moshe was an intellectual man. He could understand the sin of the Golden Calf. After all, idolatry has a philosophical background. You can disagree with it and fight it but it is still a logical position. Not going into the land of Israel could also be understood. The people there were well fortified but Moshe could not understand why the people were clamoring for meat when they were well fed. This was beyond him. The people were obviously making an emotional appeal. Many things bothered them and this became their rallying cry. Moshe could not deal with the people. They were acting like children. He complained to G-d, I gave them ideas and they are acting illogically. What should I do, Moshe says, take them to my breast, nurse them? G-d said, yes, this is what you are supposed to do. This reminds me of the time in class when a little girl raised her hand and said, "Rabbi, is it true that the children of Israel received the Torah?" I said, "Yes". "Is it also true that the children of Israel fought the Philistines?" I said, "Yes". "Is it true that the children of Israel entered the land of Israel?" I said, "Yes, it's true, but what are you getting at, what is your question?" "My question is, if the children of Israel did all these things, what were the grownups doing?" All of us are

really 99% children. To be an effective leader you have to understand people's emotions, too. Intellect and ideas are not enough. Moshe lived many times apart from the people. It was his brother, Aaron, who was close to the people. We learn that three items had to be made Mikshah, which means out of one piece. The menorah which symbolizes intellect, the trumpets which symbolizes emotion, and the cherubs which symbolizes children and interpersonal relationships. A leader must appeal not only to the people's intellect, but also to the emotions and be able to bring them together. In this Torah portion, too, we learned how when the cloud lifted over the Ark the people were to travel, but we also learned that Jethro was needed to lead them. How was this possible? The lifting of the cloud just showed they had to travel. Where they would go depended on the leader. Moshe needed his father-in-law because he needed his heart. The mind and the heart must go together. We all know that people are not just influenced by the mind but by their emotions and their friends. I would say probably more people join a Synagogue because their friends are there than for any ideological reason. Also, many join a reform congregation because they want to be more acculturated, an emotional response, while many join a traditional synagogue because they want to feel more Jewish, also an emotional response. It is the job of a leader to bring together the heart, the mind of the people, and to unify them as one. Ideas are not enough. Let us hope that all our leaders in the state of Israel and everywhere will realize this and that they will lead the people with ideas, with emotion, and will unify them as one.

Many times people come to me and say, "Rabbi, I just cannot stand it. I have explained this problem over and over again and the person just does not seem to understand it. He or she is an intelligent person, but I just cannot get through to him." I have heard this many times from parents complaining about their children and children complaining about their parents and spouses complaining about each other. Reason seems to have failed. These people are at the end of their rope. They have reached a dead end in their relationships. What's going on here? Why have these people failed to communicate?

In the Torah portion, Behaaloscha^{echa}, we have something similar happening. Moshe Rabbeinu becomes exasperated. The people, who are well fed by the manna which comes down from heaven, scream and yell at him, "Give us meat, we want meat". Moshe cannot stand it anymore and says, "Did I give birth to this people? Was I pregnant with them that they should say to me, "carry me in your breast" like a nursemaid carries a suckling child?" Moshe was even so upset that he asks G-d to "kill me rather than I should see my own wretchedness". He is at his wits end. He just cannot stand it anymore. The Rabbis ask what's going on here? Why should Moshe be so upset? Just because the people want meat, why should he scream and yell "I am not a wetnurse? Do I have to hold these people in my arms?" Is this the same Moshe who defended the people when they worshipped the golden calf and defended them when they would not go into the land of Israel? Is this the same Moshe who argued with G-d and told G-d to spare the people even though they committed the terrible sin of worshipping the golden calf and the even worse sin of not having the courage to go up to the land of Israel. What was so bad about their asking for meat? Why did Moshe get so upset?

I believe that the answer to these questions lies in the way Moshe approached all problems. Moshe approached all problems from an intellectual perspective. He failed to understand that human beings are not composed of just a mind, an intellect. People are not just ideas. People just do not respond to ideas or concepts. People are emotional beings. You have to know what they mean, not just what they say. Moshe could understand the sin of the golden calf. He never lost confidence in them because of that sin. Moshe was

JUNE 1982

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

PAGE TWO

an intellectual man. He could understand the sin of the golden calf. After all, idolatry has a philosophical base. You can disagree with it and fight it, but it is still a logical position. With the proper leadership and the marshalling of the proper arguments, you could convince the people to overcome idolatry. The same, too, could be said of the people's sin of not going up into the land of Israel. This, too, he could understand. After all, the land of Canaan was well fortified. It would take training and the knowledge of proper military tactics in order to conquer the land. Moshe could understand their problem. He could intercede with G-d on their behalf.

G-d got angry with the Jewish people when they lost hope, when they thought that nothing was worthwhile, when they thought that since nothing was worthwhile, everything was rotten and that the only thing to do in life was to lessen the heartache, to get as much pleasure as you can with the least pain. A people who thinks this way cannot be G-d's instrument for perfecting the world. It cannot be a chosen people. It will not be able to sacrifice to raise children or to be dedicated. Moshe, though, told G-d not to worry. "I will provide the right leadership. I will show them that they can have a better future. I will convince them that this world is not rotten." He would advance the ideas of Judaism against the ideas of idolatry and he would also deal with their failure to enter the land of Israel because he would give them the proper facts, the proper training, etc.

Moshe could deal with the sin of the golden calf and the sin of not entering the land of Israel, but he could not deal at all with this clamoring for meat. It did not make any sense to him. How could a people who were well fed, who had the manna which would taste like anything they wanted it to taste like, clamor for meat? The people were not being logical. It did not make any sense. Of course, in life many things do not make any sense. Most people do not say what they mean. You have to know what people really mean, not what they say. Moshe did not understand this. He did not understand that there is an important emotional component in people and that you have to deal with it. Moshe did not understand that intellectual guidance is not sufficient alone. In order to lead people, you have to get involved with them on an emotional and existential level as well.

JUNE 1982

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

PAGE THREE

G-d tells Moshe, "Yes indeed, you are a wetnurse. You have to figuratively hold the people in your arms." The Jewish people, all people, have basic needs. We all have to deal with people as total persons, as people who have emotions as well as intellect. Moshe could not deal with people who were crying for meat when they were well fed. He had to understand that something deeper was going on here. He complained to G-d, "I give them ideas and they act illogically. What should I do?" G-d tells him, "Be a nursemaid. The mind and the heart must go together."

There were three things that G-d told Moshe had to be built out of one piece when they were to be built for the Tabernacle. The menorah had to be built out of one piece. The menorah, which stands for spiritual light and the mind; the trumpets, which stand for emotion; and the cherubs on top of the Ten Commandments, which stand for interpersonal relationships. A leader must appeal not only to the people's intellect, but also to their emotions and he must be able to unify them. The mind and the heart must go together. People are not just influenced by ideas but they are influenced by their emotions and by their friends. I would say more people join a particular synagogue because of their friends rather than for any ideological reasons. A leader must recognize not just rational intellectual factors but also people's emotions and their need for friends.

This, of course, applies in a one to one relationship as well. So many times I have told parents or children or spouses to not just listen to other person's words, but listen to what the other person really means. Look at the emotions involved and look at the other people involved. It is not enough just to deal with people as if they are *mere* only ideas. Most times people do not give you their real reasons anyway. They only give you what they think are good reasons. Know what people mean not what they say and you will be able to solve your problems much better. Look at the emotions involved. Look at the friends involved. You will get through. Learn to listen not only to words but to the whole situation.

Yes, G-d told Moshe, sometimes you have to be a wetnurse. A baby cries and you have to

JUNE 1982

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

PAGE FOUR

know what he means. All of us, many times, just cry. We use words but we are really just crying. We have to know what each of us means. If we do, then we will be able to solve our problems and we will get through, and our relationships will remain meaningful.

BEHAALOSCHO 1983
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

In the Torah portion, Behaaloscho, we learn how Moshe Rabbeinu cannot take it anymore and asks to be relieved of the leadership of the Jewish people. He says, "Have I conceived this people? Have I brought them forth that You should say unto me 'Carry them in thy bosom as a nursemaid carries a sucking child'?" Moshe was so disgusted that he even said, "It is better that You kill me than I go on this way". Why did Moshe get so discouraged? Is this the same Moshe who pleaded for the Jewish people when they sinned with the golden calf? Is this the same Moshe who interceded for the people when they listened to the spies' evil report about the Land of Israel and G-d wanted to do away with them? How come Moshe did not get discouraged in those instances, but he became discouraged now, and what is Moshe complaining about being a nursemaid and carrying the people in his bosom? Moshe could understand how the Jewish people sinned at the golden calf. After all, a belief in idolatry is an intellectual position. He could refute this position. He could show them intellectually how idolatry was wrong. He could also understand how come they did not want to go into the Land of Israel. After all, they had never been there before. They did not have all the facts. Once he would give them all the facts he could show them the error of their ways. But this sin here of screaming and yelling for meat when they were well fed Moshe could not understand. Here the people had been given the manna from heaven. It could taste any way they wanted it to taste. Why were the people so upset? This was totally illogical. Moshe erred because he did not realize that people are just not disembodied minds. People have emotions and Moshe could not deal with an illogical problem. G-d tells him, "Yes, Moshe, you have to be a nursemaid to them. You have to deal with them on an emotional level as well." Unfortunately, today many people make this same mistake. They fail to realize that we human beings are much more than just a mind. Many people today feel that if they understand the dynamics of a situation then they are immune from any consequences of their actions. Understanding a process allows you to be free from its consequences. Many people especially in interpersonal relations will say, "I will not get jealous, I know what is going on" or "I understand everything involved so I will not get angry". This, of course, is foolishness. Just because they understand the principles of gravity does not mean that if they jump

off a cliff they will not be hurt. Understanding all the reasons for religious observance will also not make us exempt from keeping them. In the beginning of this Torah portion we learn about the menorah. We refer to the menorah as a seven-branched candlebra, but actually it is only a six-branched candlebra. The middle shaft is just the main shaft upon which the menorah rests. Why should this be referred to as a seven-branched candlebra? The Rabbis explain that all the other six branches had to be illuminated by the central shaft which stood for the Torah, that all aspects of man must be illuminated by the Torah not just his mind but also his emotions and all his drives. Unfortunately, today in our educational system we stress many times just the mind and forget about the emotions so, therefore, there are many brilliant people who act in an infantile way. Their emotions have never been trained. We have to know when to cry and when to laugh, when to sing and when to mourn. It is wrong to go into a house of mourning and play dance music. It is also wrong to go to a wedding and mourn. We have to know how to deal with people on an emotional level as well as an intellectual level. G-d tells Moshe that He is going to give him 70 elders to help him with the Jewish people. What, though, happened to the original elders? The Rabbis say that these original elders lacked certain qualities which are necessary in order to teach us how to use our emotions. The Rabbis say that when Moshe first came to Egypt all the elders were enthusiastic about his mission to free the Jewish people. They offered to go with Moshe to speak to Pharaoh, but as Moshe and Aaron came closer to the palace each one of them dropped off one by one until only Moshe and Aaron were left. Their resolve and courage had vanished. Later on at Mount Sinai when the Torah was given it mentions that they ate and they drank. These leaders were interested only in the Kiddush not in the davening and religion. They had no reverence. They used religion for their own purposes. Shortly afterwards they perished. Finally the new leaders were chosen because in Egypt these were the people who refused to punish their fellow Jews for not making their quota of bricks when Pharaoh would not give them straw and they, themselves, were beaten. In order to affect people on an emotional level a person needs courage, resolve, reverence, dedication, and

self-sacrifice. You just cannot appeal to people's reason. You must set an example. It is a slow process, but it is the only one that really works. There are no shortcuts. These same qualities are essential to be successful in life. Moshe wanted just to appeal to the mind. Although Moshe had these other qualities as well, he did not realize that they are as important as reason. In life we many times have to take the slow road of hard work and dedicated example in order to be successful. Shortcuts do not work. I am reminded of the story of a fellow who offered \$1,000,000 to a labor union representative who would win a gold tournament. One of the carpenters in the union called the union and said, "You know, Jack Nicklaus used to be a carpenter when he was in college". The other fellow said, "Oh, how can we use him? He doesn't have a union card or anything". The carpenter said, "But, it's a \$1,000,000". The union representative said, "O.K., we'll see what we can do". The next day the carpenter called the head of the union again and said, "Jack Nicklaus did go. He birdied the first four holes and birdied the last four holes". The union representative said, "Well, did he win?" The carpenter replied, "No, some plumber named Arnold Palmer won". Shortcuts never work. Reason together with dedicated leadership is the only way to eventually change people.

36.
BEHALOSCHO 1984
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

In the Torah portion Behaloscho we have many things which do not seem to go together. The Torah portion begins by telling us about the Menorah, how it was to blaze with one light. Even though it had seven branches it was to blaze together as one light. Later we learn about the dedication of the Levites when we learn about the second Passover, that Jews who were ritually unclean and were not able to celebrate the first Passover were permitted to observe. We also learn about the cloud which covered them by day and the pillar of fire which hovered over them by night. We also learn about the trumpets of silver which were blown to call the Jewish people together and we learn about the order of march and how the Ark was taken out and returned and then we learn about the complaints the Jewish people had against Moshe. In fact, we learn how when the Jewish people complained about meat he wanted to throw in the towel and give up. He said, "Should I carry them as a nursemaid carries a sucking child?" He had enough. He even said, "If you deal with me this way so you will deal with me, kill me so I will not see in my wretchedness." This Torah portion seems to contain many unrelated things. It seems strange that this Torah portion starts by teaching us about the menorah when we already learned about it in Vayikra, the Book of Leviticus. What did the Torah have to tell us about the menorah here? It seems to me that by placing the details of the menorah here the Torah was telling us what this Sedra is all about. We all know that it is not the material things which cement together relationships. It is the spiritual things. Marriages, synagogues, and communities stay together when they share certain values. When they no longer share these values they split. The individuals must appear together as one blaze of light. There were seven branches of the menorah but they all appeared as one. The light merged into one another. How, though, can we maintain this spiritual unity? How can we assure that marriages and communities and institutions stay together? The rest of the Torah portion, I believe, is telling us how they can. First of all, there must be faithfulness, devotion to one another. I am surprised many times when young people come to me and say, "I can't see what is wrong about getting married and still having a girlfriend." Maybe they can't see it, but I am sure their spouse can. They must be faithful to the institution that they belong

to. Secondly, they must not try to get out of things that they could get out of. They must be willing to help each other. The Jewish people who did not celebrate the first Passover did not have to ask to celebrate a second Passover. They were exempt from the first Passover because they were doing a Mitzvah, burying the dead. This ritually defiles but it is not a moral sin. They could have said, "We are engaged in a Mitzvah and can, therefore, forget about celebrating Pesach", but they did not. Just because a person is away on a birthday or anniversary does not mean they cannot celebrate it when they come back. Just because a person serves on an important committee does not mean that he cannot make a nice contribution. Even we we can get out of doing things legally we should not do it. Thirdly, we have to let everybody blow his own horn. Moshe's trumpets were his own. It was only the Shofar that was passed from generation to generation. Every leader had their own trumpets. Everybody must be allowed to do their own thing but in faithfulness. Today many young people want to do their own thing but not in faithfulness, and I am not just speaking about sexual faithfulness. The person who stays out late and is not concerned with eating with his family or being with their family is not doing their own thing with faithfulness. They must make sure they have time for their family and institution. Also, a person must be a cloud during the day and a fire at night. During the periods of depression they must offer hope. During periods of success the person must counsel moderation and not let success go to their head. They must shield them from getting a big head. Finally, in every relationship you must deal with complaints. Some complaints are valid and some are not. You have to know what people mean and not what they say. Moshe was an intellectual. He could not understand why his people were complaining about meat. He wanted to give up. He did not understand that they were not complaining about meat but their lives in general, about the difficulty of living by the Torah. Just like in the army people are always complaining about the food, but that is not really what they are complaining about. They do not want to die. It is the same in a hospital.

People are complaining because they are frightened of the operation, of what is happening to them. A person must understand what the person is really complaining about. In order to have a true relationship, in order for spiritual values to cement a relationship a person must be faithful, must allow the other person to do his things within faithfulness. He must do things that he or she could legally get out of. He must be an inspiration in dark times and a source of caution in times of success, and know what a person really means and not what he says. If he does these things then his relationships will shine bright as a symbol of spiritual relationships in Judaism. I am reminded of the story a little kid told me the other day. He said, "Rabbi, what happens when a group of ducks fly upsidedown?" I said, "I don't know." He told me, "They quack up." Unfortunately, in life if people do not enhance their spiritual relationships they crack up, too.

