

# B'haalot'cha @ DC Beit Midrash @ בהעלותך

Monday, 31 May 2004; 12 Sivan 5764

## Welcome to the DC Beit Midrash!

The Chumash (Five Books of Moses) is divided into 54 portions, which Jews read sequentially each week in services. This Shabbat, we will be reading Parshat B'shallach, from the book of Sh'mot (Exodus). Tonight, a member of our community will lead us in a text-study of this portion. The voices of both past and contemporary interpreters will inform our discussion.

Below you will find a summary of this week's Torah portion, along with brief biographies of the commentators cited. The presentation will be followed by chavruta (paired) study on a subject of your choice.

בהעלותך, במדבר ה'א-י"ט

## ***This week's parasha (Torah portion): B'haalot'cha, Bemidbar (Numbers) 8:1-12:16***

The Israelites have been out of Egypt for two years and are well into their daily experience of wandering in the Wilderness. This week's parasha gives an interesting blend of the ritual and personal concerns of the people. First, we read that Aharon is instructed to light the Menorah, and its construction is reviewed. The portion then continues with a description of the dedication of the Levites as assistants to the priests. The celebration of the second Pesach (Passover) is recounted, but with an interesting twist: some people can't bring the required sacrificial offering, due to ritual impurity, so God gives them a second chance a month later, with the introduction of Pesach Sheini. Then, the movements of the Pillar of Cloud by day and the Pillar of Fire by night are explained, indicating God's presence among the people and the nature of divine leadership in the wilderness. As the central story of this portion, the Israelites take to complaining about the lack of variety in their diet. They are provided with Manna from heaven, but this is not enough - they want meat! Even though God is angered by the people's impudence, God agrees to satisfy the people's craving for meat and sends flocks of quail. To make a graphic point, God sends so much meat that it comes out the people's nostrils! Next, Moshe expresses frustration as the leader of a difficult people. To help, Moshe is instructed by God to appoint 70 Elders to help him govern and judge the nation. The Elders are divinely confirmed and given the gift of prophecy. In a final episode of dissention, Moshe's own brother Aharon and sister Miriam speak slander against Moshe. As a result, Miriam is stricken with Tzara'at, a scaly skin affliction, and is sent out of the camp. Moshe pleads with God to heal her.

(Adapted from Kolel.org, [http://www.kolel.org/pages/parasha/bemidbar\\_summary.html](http://www.kolel.org/pages/parasha/bemidbar_summary.html))

*This week's sources:*

## **Sifrei Bemidbar**

**(c. 300 CE)**

*Midrash* comes from a Hebrew root which means "to search out, to investigate." Thus, this is a Jewish method of exegesis that sought to discover deeper meanings in the text beyond the literal one. Since the rabbis greatly venerated every letter of the Hebrew Scriptures as of Divine origin, every detail was seen to be significant. Sometimes *Midrash* is used with the legal portions of the Torah (*halacha*) and sometimes it is used with the non-legal portions (*aggadah*), such as stories about the main protagonists in the Bible. There are many different collections of *Midrash*, written down over a period of almost a thousand years, from 300–1200 CE.

*Sifrei BeMidbar* is the *halakhic* *Midrash* on Numbers, compiled in Israel in the late 4th century CE. Often, *Sifrei* to Numbers and Deuteronomy are considered one *Midrash* because they are usually printed together, but they have two distinct sources. *Sifrei BeMidbar* resembles the *Mekhilta* and is attributed to the school of Rabbi Yishmael.

(Excerpted from [learn.jtsa.edu/topics/diduknow/sources/midrashim.shtml](http://learn.jtsa.edu/topics/diduknow/sources/midrashim.shtml))

## **Avot d'Rabbi Natan**

Avot D'Rabbi Natan is an extra-canonical minor tractate of Talmud, usually printed at the end of tractate Nezikin. It is a commentary on tractate Avot - the version of Rabbi Natan - as it existed prior to being edited by Judah the Prince in the process of canonizing the Mishnah.

(adapted from <http://learn.jtsa.edu/topics/diduknow/sources/midrashim.shtml>)

## **Chafetz Chaim**

**(1838-1933)**

Rabbi Israel Meir HaCohen Kagan is commonly known as the "Chafetz Chaim," the name of his famous work on guarding one's tongue. Born in Zhetel, Poland, on February 6, 1838, he was taught until age 10 by his parents and then moved to Vilna to further his Jewish studies. The Chafetz Chaim's greatest legacy is the 21 books which he published. His first work, *Sefer Chafetz Chaim* (1873), is the first attempt to to organize and clarify the laws regarding evil talk and

gossip (*lashon hara*). He later wrote other works, including Shmirat HaLashon, which emphasized the importance of guarding one's tongue by quoting our Sages. The Mishnah Brurah (1894-1907) is his commentary on the daily laws of a Jew (his first series in the Shulchan Aruch).

(adapted from <http://www.torah.org/learning/halashon/ccbio.html>)

**All the Women Followed Her: A Collection of Writings on Miriam the Prophet and the Women of Exodus. Rebecca Schwartz, ed., Rikudei Miriam Press, 2001**

"Miriam: Parashat Beha'alotecha" by Marion Weinberg

The book says she was a speech and language pathologist who gave the paper as her (adult) bat mitzvah talk and then died nine months later of breast cancer in 1997.

Plus others in the same volume by Rebecca Schwartz, editor of the volume, co-author of the Dancing with Miriam Haggadah, and a teacher in the San Francisco Bay area; and Ruth Sohn, teacher in LA and contributor to the Kol Haneshama prayerbook.

*This week's teacher:*

**Virginia Spatz**

**[vspatz@saltmine.radix.net](mailto:vspatz@saltmine.radix.net)**

*This week's food*

**is sponsored in honor of Becky Katz who just passed the bar! Way to go, Becky!!!**

*This week's food shlepper:*

**Margie Klein**

*Wanna teach, think about teaching, or suggest a teacher? Email Jesse Grauman at [teachers@dcbeitmidrash.org](mailto:teachers@dcbeitmidrash.org)*

*Wanna sponsor food? Email Simma Asber at [food@dcbeitmidrash.org](mailto:food@dcbeitmidrash.org)*

*Questions, feedback, wanna join our email list? Anything else? Email [info@dcbeitmidrash.org](mailto:info@dcbeitmidrash.org)*

**WWW.DCBEITMIDRASH.ORG**

# Bemidbar, Chapter 12

## במדבר פרק יב

פרק יב

א וַתְּדַבֵּר מִרְיָם וְאַהֲרֹן בְּמִשְׁהַ עַל־אֲדֹתַי הָאִשָּׁה הַכַּשִּׁית אֲשֶׁר לָקַח כִּי־אִשָּׁה כָּשִׁית לָקַח:  
ב וַיֹּאמְרוּ הֲרָק אַךְ־בְּמִשְׁהַ דְּבַר יְהוָה הֲלֹא גַם־בָּנוּ דְּבַר וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה: ג וְהָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה עִנּוּ [עֲנִי]  
מֵאֵד מִכָּל הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה: ד וַיֹּאמְרוּ יְהוָה פִּתְּאִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן  
וְאֶל־מִרְיָם צֵאוּ שְׁלֹשְׁכֶם אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וּצֵאוּ שְׁלֹשְׁתֶּם: ה וַיֵּרֶד יְהוָה בְּעַמֹּד עָנָן וַיַּעֲמֵד פֶּתַח  
הָאֹהֶל וַיִּקְרָא אֶתְרוֹן וּמִרְיָם וַיִּצְאוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם: ו וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמַעוּ־נָא דְבַרִּי אִם־יְהִיֶּה נְבִיאֲכֶם יְהוָה  
בְּמִרְאָה אֵלָיו אֲתוֹדַע בְּחִלּוֹם אֲדַבְּרֶבּוּ: ז לֹא־כֵן עֲבַדִּי מֹשֶׁה בְּכָל־בֵּיתִי נֶאֱמָן הוּא: ח פֹּה אֶל־פֶּה  
אֲדַבְּרֶבּוּ וּמִרְאָה וְלֹא בְּחִידָת וּתְמִנַת יְהוָה יִבֵּיט וּמִדּוּעַ לֹא יִרְאוּתֶם לְדַבֵּר בְּעַבְדִּי בְּמִשְׁהַ:  
ט וַיַּחֲרֹ־אֶף יְהוָה בָּם וַיִּלֶךְ: י וְהֶעֱנָן סָר מֵעַל הָאֹהֶל וְהִנֵּה מִרְיָם מִצְרַעַת כְּשִׁלְג וַיִּפּוּ אֶתְרוֹן  
אֶל־מִרְיָם וְהִנֵּה מִצְרַעַת: יא וַיֹּאמֶר אֶתְרוֹן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בִּי אֲדֹנָי אֶל־נָא תִשֶׁת עֲלֵינוּ חֲטָאת אֲשֶׁר  
נּוֹאֲלָנוּ וְאֲשֶׁר חֲטָאנוּ: יב אֶל־נָא תְהִי כְּמַת אֲשֶׁר בְּצִאתוֹ מִרְחֹם אִמּוֹ וַיֹּאכַל חֲצִי בָשָׂרוֹ: יג וַיִּצְעַק  
מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה לֵאמֹר אֵל נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ: יד [מִפְטִיר] יד וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאַבְיָה יָרֵק  
יָרֵק בְּפָנֶיהָ הֲלֹא תִפְלֵם שְׁבַעַת יָמִים תִּסָּגֵר שְׁבַעַת יָמִים מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְאַחַר תֵּאֱסֹף: טו וַתִּסָּגֵר  
מִרְיָם מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה שְׁבַעַת יָמִים וְהָעָם לֹא נָסַע עַד־הָאֲסֹף מִרְיָם: טז וְאַחַר נָסְעוּ הָעָם מִחֲצָרוֹת  
וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּמִדְבַר פָּאָרָן:

## Chapter 12

1. And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Kushite woman whom he had married; for he had married a Kushite woman.
2. And they said, Has the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? has he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it.
3. And the man Moses was very humble, more than any other men which were upon the face of the earth.
4. And the Lord spoke suddenly to Moses, and to Aaron, and to Miriam, Come out you three to the Tent of Meeting. And the three came out.
5. And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the Tent, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forth.
6. And he said, Hear now my words; If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision, and will speak to him in a dream.
7. Not so with my servant Moses, for he is the trusted one in all my house.
8. With him I speak mouth to mouth, manifestly, and not in dark speech; and he beheld the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?
9. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed.
10. And the cloud departed from off the Tent; and, behold, Miriam had become leprous, white as snow; and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous.
11. And Aaron said to Moses, Oh, my lord, I beg you, lay not the sin upon us, because we have done foolishly, and because we have sinned.
12. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb.
13. And Moses cried to the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech you.
14. And the Lord said to Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again.
15. And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days; and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.
16. And afterward the people removed from Hazeroth, and camped in the wilderness of Paran.