

Let the one who is Righteous continue to practice Righteousness, and Let the one who is Filthy continue to be Filthy

This week's reading is from *Parsahat Behaalotcha (Bamidbar / Numbers 8:1-12:15)*. Following the construction of the Tabernacle, Moshe and the people sanctified that holy place by bringing sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord descended upon the Tabernacle as a cloud. The cloud covered the Tabernacle by day and by night having the appearance of fire by night. The Torah states, *עַל-פִּי יְהוָה יִסְעוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל-פִּי יְהוָה יִחַנוּ כָּל-יְמֵי* *9:18 At the command of the Lord the sons of Israel would set out, and at the command of the Lord they would camp; as long as the cloud settled over the tabernacle, they remained camped. (NASB)* Note how the MT is written saying, *עַל-פִּי יְהוָה* “*At the command of the Lord...*” translated literally to say, “*upon/at the lips/mouth of the Lord,*” which is paralleled to the cloud moving and the people responding. According to the Torah, the Lord led the sons of Israel through the wilderness by the words of His lips. The Lord led and guided the people, when they were to move and when they were to remain still. It is at this point in the Scriptures when Israel leaves the wilderness of Sinai. Studying the overall narrative, the people appear to be contented while they remained at Sinai, however, when they are told to move, being led by the Lord, by his word (*עַל-פִּי יְהוָה*) they begin to complain, *11:1 Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the Lord; and when the Lord heard it, His anger was kindled, and the fire of the Lord burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp. (NASB)* The people complain about the Manna that God provided and longed for the fish, cucumbers, melons and leeks that were available in the land of Egypt.

As a result of these things, Mitzrayim (Egypt), has become a picture of sin, disobedience, and idolatry according to the Scriptures. The people longed not just for food but also for the lifestyle, luxuries, and the sin of Egypt. Moshe pleads on behalf of the people before the Lord (*11:10-11*) because of their sinful hearts. The Lord then sends meat and provides so much meat that they become sick and loathsome of the meat. While

Moshe spoke to the Lord, he had doubts and the Lord said “*Is the hand of the Lord short*” (הֲיֵד יְהוָה תִּקְצָר)? All that Moshe had witnessed of the Lord delivering Israel from Egypt, and yet he doubted the Lord was able to provide meat for the people. Do you have doubts in God’s ability today? This week let’s look at the significance of the words, על-פי יְהוָה “*upon/at the lips/mouth of the Lord.*”

ספר במדבר פרק ט Bamidbar / Numbers 9:15-23

טו וּבַיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת-הַמִּשְׁכָּן כִּסָּה הָעָנָן אֶת-הַמִּשְׁכָּן לְאַהֲלֵי הָעֵדוּת וּבֶ-עֶרְבֹת יִהְיֶה עַל-הַמִּשְׁכָּן כְּמֵרְאֵה-אֵשׁ עַד-בֹּקֶר: טז כֵּן יִהְיֶה תָּמִיד הָעָנָן יִכְסֶּנּוּ וּמֵרְאֵה-אֵשׁ לַלַּיְלָה: יז וּלְפִי הָעֲלֹת הָעָנָן מֵעַל הָאֹהֶל וְאַחֲרֵי כֵן יִסְעוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכֹּן-שָׁם הָעָנָן שָׁם יִחַנוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: יח **עַל-פִּי יְהוָה יִסְעוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל-פִּי יְהוָה יִחַנוּ כָּל-יְמֵי אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכֹּן הָעָנָן עַל-הַמִּשְׁכָּן יִחַנוּ:** יט וּבַהֲאָרִיז הָעָנָן עַל-הַמִּשְׁכָּן יָמִים רַבִּים וְשָׁמְרוּ בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-מִשְׁמֶרֶת יְהוָה וְלֹא יִסְעוּ: כ וַיֵּשׁ אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה הָעָנָן יָמִים מִסְפָּר עַל-הַמִּשְׁכָּן **עַל-פִּי יְהוָה יִחַנוּ וְעַל-פִּי יְהוָה יִסְעוּ:** כא וַיֵּשׁ אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה הָעָנָן מֵעֶרֶב עַד-בֹּקֶר וְנִעְלָה הָעָנָן בַּבֹּקֶר וְנָסְעוּ אוֹ יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה וְנִעְלָה הָעָנָן וְנָסְעוּ: כב אוֹ-יָמִים אוֹ-חֳדָשׁ אוֹ-יָמִים כְּהֲאָרִיז הָעָנָן עַל-הַמִּשְׁכָּן לִשְׁכֹּן עָלָיו יִחַנוּ בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יִסְעוּ וּבַהֲעֲלֹתוֹ יִסְעוּ: כג **עַל-פִּי יְהוָה יִחַנוּ וְעַל-פִּי יְהוָה יִסְעוּ אֶת-מִשְׁמֶרֶת יְהוָה שָׁמְרוּ עַל-פִּי יְהוָה בְּיַד-מֹשֶׁה:**

9:15 Now on the day that the tabernacle was erected the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony, and in the evening it was like the appearance of fire over the tabernacle, until morning. 9:16 So it was continuously; the cloud would cover it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. 9:17 Whenever the cloud was lifted from over the tent, afterward the sons of Israel would then set out; and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the sons of Israel would camp. 9:18 At the command of the Lord the sons of Israel would set out, and at the command of the Lord they would camp; as long as the cloud settled over the tabernacle, they remained camped. 9:19 Even when the cloud lingered over the tabernacle for many days, the sons of Israel would keep the Lord’s charge and not set out. 9:20 If sometimes the cloud remained a few days over the tabernacle, according to the command of the Lord they remained camped. Then according to the command of the Lord they set out. 9:21 If sometimes the cloud remained from evening until morning, when the cloud was lifted in the morning, they would move out; or if it remained in the daytime and at night, whenever the cloud was lifted, they would set out. 9:22 Whether it was two days or a month or a year that the cloud lingered over the tabernacle, staying above it, the sons of Israel remained camped and did not set out; but when it was lifted, they did set out. 9:23 At the command of the Lord they camped, and at the command of the Lord they set out; they kept the Lord’s charge, according to the command of the Lord through Moses. (NASB)

In the Apostolic Writings, according to Romans, the Apostle Paul said, *15:4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.* (NASB) Note how Paul is calling upon the Torah (תורה), the Prophets (נביאים), and the Writings (כתובים) as important for instruction and encouragement, and that we must persevere in studying the Tanach for this brings hope in our lives. The Tanach is not simply something old and to be discarded.

In this week's Torah portion, throughout *Bamidbar / Numbers 9:15-23*, we find the phrase, *עַל-פִּי יְהוָה* repeated 7 times. The repetition of these words suggest the Lord wants us to pay careful attention to this section of Scripture. As noted earlier, the words *עַל-פִּי יְהוָה* “*At the command of the Lord...*” may be translated to say, “*upon the lips/mouth of the Lord,*” and is paralleled to the cloud moving and the people responding. According to the Torah, the Lord led the sons of Israel through the wilderness by His word. When the cloud would move, the people knew it was time to go, and when the cloud stopped the people knew that they were to stop. There was a physical sign of the cloud which caused the people to know what the Lord wanted them to do. Today, we have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which we are told helps to guide us, direct us, and instruct us in truth. With this in mind, we do not have a physical sign but an internal spiritual movement of God which leads and directs us. How important do you think it is to be at peace within ourselves (staying away from sin) in order to hear the Lord speaking and moving in our hearts?

These Scriptures show a parallel between the physical manifestation of God moving in the pillar and the Word of God that proceeds from His mouth. Note how *Bamidbar / Numbers 9:23* states, *כג עַל-פִּי יְהוָה יִחַנו, וְעַל-פִּי יְהוָה יִסְעוּ אֶת-מִשְׁמַרְתּוֹ יְהוָה שָׁמְרוּ עַל-פִּי יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם-הַהוּא:* *At the command of the Lord they camped, and at the command of the Lord they set out; they kept the Lord's charge, according to the command of the Lord through Moses.* (NASB) The Targum Jonathan on Bamidbar states, *עַל פּוּם מִימְרָא דִּי נֶשְׂרָן וְעַל פּוּם מִימְרָא דִּי נִטְלִין ית מְטַרְתּוֹ מִימְרָא דִּי נִטְרִין עַל פּוּם מִימְרָא דִּי בִידָא דְמִשָּׁה* saying “*according to the word (memra) of the Lord.*” The Word (Memra) of God provides us with the direction to move during the day, and provides light by night to see. In addition, note how

the Lord provided light (*by the pillar of fire*) at night (*in the darkness*) to lead the people where they should go. Here, according to the Torah, there is a parallel to the movement of God in the pillar, to His word (the command), and to the light God provides for his people to walk uprightly in this present evil age. These things (*the command, truth, light, righteousness, justice, God moving, and our being led, etc*) are all tied together by the Word of God that proceeds from His mouth (*the Scriptures*).

In *Tehillim / Psalms 19:5-7*, David, in a similar way, draws a parallel between “light” and “speech.” In the *Talmud Bavli Pesachim 10*, the rabbis say, “*When Rabha commenced to recite the Havdalah prayer he said thus: “Who hath made a distinction between sanctified and ordinary days, between light and darkness, between Israel and other nations, and between the seventh day and the six working days.”* The rabbis recognize the difference between light and darkness as it is paralleled to righteousness and unrighteousness. According to the Torah, the Lord made a distinction between the ordinary days and the Shabbat, He made a distinction between the time to work and the time to rest, He made a distinction between Israel and the nations, and He made a distinction between what it means to walk in righteousness as opposed to unrighteousness. Based upon the Torah portion, Parashat Beha’alotcha, the light is used midrashically as a reference to God’s directing our lives according to His Word, He makes a distinction in our lives, between the light and darkness, between righteousness and unrighteousness in the mitzvot, according to the Torah. In addition, the difference between light and darkness may also be understood as a parallel between the knowledge of good and evil. In the light one is able to judge how one walks and to choose the right path to walk in. If the Torah has a one-to-one correspondence to the light (righteousness), if we are not studying Torah, how is it possible to choose the right path (righteousness) to walk in? In addition, darkness is used to hide ones actions (his evil ways), to walk in wickedness without others observing what one is doing. Light has also been used to illustrate the choice between following the commandments of God, in His promises, and seeking to join one’s self to the Lord, and the hope for His eternal rewards, as opposed to darkness having the meaning to follow the enticing of the devil which persuade man to do evil and become captive to sin, wickedness, and being damned to hell which is also described as eternal darkness.

All of these concepts are incorporated into the first epistle of John

chapter 1. John says that God is Light and in Him is no darkness. The Aramaic Targum on *Tehillim / Psalms 19:4* states, לית מימר דתורעמתא, *There is no utterance of complaint, and there are no words of confusion, for their voice is not heard. (EMC)* Darkness, sin, unrighteousness, and wickedness are paralleled to the utterance of complaint and words of confusion (*see Devarim / Deuteronomy 9 for the consequences of complaint*). Note in *Tehillim / Psalms 68*, David speaks of the unrighteous being deceived by their own unrighteousness. Walking in unrighteousness and wickedness has the capacity of self deception which causes one to persuade himself to continue in his own unrighteousness, going from bad to worse. In the Lord God Almighty, there is no darkness. God is not the author of confusion (*1 Corinthians 14:33*). And using this comparison, John states that if we say we have fellowship with the Lord and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

Can you see the significance of these statements, and the Torah portion coupled with the repetition of the phrase, על-פי יהוה 7 times in *Bamidbar / Numbers 9:23* states, כג על-פי יהוה יִחַנּוּ וְעַל-פִּי יְהוָה יִסְעוּ אֶת-מִשְׁמַרְתְּךָ, *At the command of the Lord they camped, and at the command of the Lord they set out; they kept the Lord's charge, according to the command of the Lord through Moses. (NASB)* How important is it for our lives to be led by the command, by the hand of God, and in the power of His Holy Spirit? The difference between light and darkness is understood as knowing the difference between truth and falsehood. The people in the wilderness journey moving according to the word of the Lord in their midst (the cloud, *9:15-19*), and yet they complained of the gifts God had given them to eat and to live (*11:1*). There were some who lived in the midst of the congregation and yet walked and lived in the unrighteousness of their hearts. This led to the deception of others (see Parashat Korach) through the manner in which they lived, complaining against the Lord, against His word, and against His provision and sustaining power. We should be careful not to do the same.

John wrote in his epistle, in *1 John 2:15-17* the following:

1 John 2:15-17

*2:15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world.
If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in*

him. 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 2:17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. (NASB)

If one loves darkness (*which is paralleled to sin, unrighteousness, and wickedness*), as John describes, the things of the world, lust and pride, the love of the father is not in him. Notice how this is something that one does which causes the love of the Father to leave or not reside within such a person. Note how John is also exhorting those who have placed their faith in Yeshua the Messiah. The rabbis recognize these things, and write about these things according to the *Mishnah Pirkei Avot 4:21*, and *Missilat Yesharim on Pirkei Avot 4:21*.

Mishnah Pirkei Avot 4:21

Rabbi Elazar HaKapor says: Envy, lust and honor drive a man from the world. רבי אלעזר הקפר אומר, הקנאה והתאוה, והכבוד מוציאין את האדם מן העולם.

Messilat Yesharim on Pirkei Avot 4:21

To summarize, a man was created not for his station in this world, but for his station in the World to Come. It is only that his station in this world is a means towards his station in the World to Come, which is the ultimate goal. This accounts for numerous statements of our Sages of blessed memory, all in a similar vein, likening this world to the place and time of preparation, and the next world to the place which has been set aside for rest and for the eating of what has already been prepared. This is their intent in saying (Avoth 4:21), “This world is similar to a corridor ...,” as our Sages of blessed memory have said (Eruvin 22a), “Today for their performance and tomorrow to receive their reward,” “He who exerted himself on Friday will eat on the Sabbath” (Avodah Zarah 3a), “This world is like the shore and the World to Come like the sea ...” (Koheleth Rabbah 1:36), and many other statements along

the same lines.

Note how the Mishnah in *Pirkei Avot 4:21* states that envy, lust, and honor drive a man from this world. What does it mean to be driven from this world? Could it be that these things cause our lives to be cut short? Do you believe our lives could be cut short if we lived in this way even if we place our faith in Yeshua the Messiah? Why do you think John is writing so extensively to God's children warning of these things? Note how *Missilat Yesharim on Pirkei Avot 4:21* states that "*it is only a man's station in this world, which is a means towards his station in the Olam Haba (The World to Come).*" This suggests that the way we live here on earth is preparatory for life in the World to Come. We practice walking in righteousness, we practice walking in the light, being guided by God's Word, and being sensitive to the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives all in preparation for the World to Come. Do you believe your life here on earth is preparatory for life with God in eternity? John says that if we walk in the light (see *1 John 1:7-9*), just as He is in the Light, we have fellowship with Him (God), and with one another. The people of God in the wilderness however walked in the light of God's presence each day. They were taught the Word of the Lord at the hand of Moshe (מֹשֶׁה) and yet they did not appear to have real fellowship with the Lord in heaven. The people longed for their former lives of bondage and sin. Do you long for the former life, do you long for sin? Do you think this happens today amongst some found in our congregations? The *Mishnah Pirkei Avot 4:2* states,

Mishnah Pirkei Avot 4:2

Ben Azzai says: Run to do an easy mitzvah, and flee from sin; since one mitzvah leads to another mitzvah, and one sin leads to another sin; since the reward for a mitzvah is another mitzvah, and the reward for one sin is another sin.

בן עזאי אומר, הוי רץ למצוה קלה [כבחמורה], ובורח מן העברה
שמצוה גוררת מצוה, ועברה גוררת עברה. ששכר מצוה, מצוה.
ושכר עברה, עברה .

One command leads to another, which is similar to saying one righteous



deed, when done for the glory of God and for His Name's sake, leads to our desire to do another because we love Him. Similarly, the nature of sin is that one sin leads to another. The rabbis say that the reward for a command is another command, saying essentially that the reward for a righteous deed is another righteous deed. The reason being there is joy in the performance of a command for the glory of God and the Lord will cause us to want to do more for His kingdom. And comparatively, the reward for sin is another sin because sin feeds the flesh and the body desires sin. So by this reasoning, a righteous man will continue on for the better, to more and more righteous deeds, whereas, the unrighteous man will continue on in more and more unrighteousness. The words of the rabbis are very reminiscent of what is written according to *Revelation 22:10-17*.

Revelation 22:10-17

22:10 And he said to me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. 22:11 'Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.' 22:12 'Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. 22:13 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.' 22:14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. 22:15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. 22:16 'I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.' 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. (NASB)

John writes of the One speaking to him in revelation saying, *Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy;*

and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy. If you are bound up in sin, there is no hope without the power of God to overcome. Therefore, it is very important to seek the Lord's help in the Messiah to overcome sin in our lives and to walk in God's ways.

The Apostle John said in *1 John 1:7-9* that, the blood of Yeshua His Son cleanses us from all sin, however, if one walks in sin (*practices sin, walks in darkness*), there is no fellowship with God or His people. Does the blood of Christ cleanse when one practices walking in darkness (in sin)? The point of this week's Torah portion is that you may find yourself living in the midst of the congregation of God, but do you truly desire to turn from your sins, to seek His face for forgiveness and simply to draw near (*Mark 9:43-49*), and to be led by the command, by the hand of God, and in the power of His Holy Spirit? This is a call for personal reflection and examination; the blood of Yeshua cleanses from sin only if we truly seek Him and His truth, in Teshuvah (Repentance)! On a spiritual level, one receives the forgiveness of sins in the Messiah Yeshua. But it isn't simply a matter of believing in the sacrifice and then going on to live life as if there was no sacrifice. One must also have a repentant heart, to seek the Lord for the forgiveness of sin, and to turn from sin (*to go and sin no more, John 8:11*). The Torah principle at work here is the manner in which one is seeking the Lord for forgiveness, that is coupled with sacrifice, and turning from sin (Teshuvah, repentance). Each piece must be in place. Without the Lord's help, this would be impossible!



