

B'ha-alot'kha

Numbers 8:1 - 12:16

This translation was taken from the JPS Tanakh

Chapter 8

1 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Speak to Aaron and say to him, "When you mount the lamps, let the seven lamps give light at the front of the lampstand." 3 Aaron did so; he mounted the lamps at the front of the lampstand, as the Lord had commanded Moses.--4 Now this is how the lampstand was made: it was hammered work of gold, hammered from base to petal. According to the pattern that the Lord had shown Moses, so was the lampstand made.

5 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 6 Take the Levites from among the Israelites and cleanse them. 7 This is what you shall do to them to cleanse them: sprinkle on them water of purification, and let them go over their whole body with a razor, and wash their clothes; thus they shall be cleansed. 8 Let them take a bull of the herd, and with it a meal offering of choice flour with oil mixed in, and you take a second bull of the herd for a sin offering. 9 You shall bring the Levites forward before the Tent of Meeting. Assemble the whole Israelite community, 10 and bring the Levites forward before the Lord. Let the Israelites lay their hands upon the Levites, 11 and let Aaron designate the Levites before the Lord as an elevation offering from the Israelites, that they may perform the service of the Lord.

12 The Levites shall now lay their hands upon the heads of the bulls; one shall be offered to the Lord as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, to make expiation for the Levites.

13 You shall place the Levites in attendance upon Aaron and his sons, and designate them as an elevation offering to the Lord. 14 Thus you shall set the Levites apart from the Israelites, and the Levites shall be Mine. 15 Thereafter the Levites shall be qualified for the service of the Tent of Meeting, once you have cleansed them and designated them as an elevation offering. 16 For they are formally assigned to Me from among the Israelites: I have taken them for Myself in place of all the first issue of the womb, of all the first-born of the Israelites. 17 For every first-born among the Israelites, man as well as beast, is Mine; I consecrated them to Myself at the time that I smote every first-born in the land of Egypt. 18 Now I take the Levites instead of every first-born of the Israelites; 19 and from among the Israelites I formally assign the Levites to Aaron and his sons, to perform the service for the Israelites in the Tent of Meeting and to make expiation for the Israelites, so that no plague may afflict the Israelites for coming too near the sanctuary.

20 Moses, Aaron, and the whole Israelite community did with the Levites accordingly; just as the Lord had commanded Moses in regard to the Levites, so the Israelites did with them. 21 The Levites purified themselves and washed their clothes; and Aaron designated them as an elevation offering before the Lord, and Aaron made expiation for them to

cleanse them. 22 Thereafter the Levites were qualified to perform their service in the Tent of Meeting, under Aaron and his sons. As the Lord had commanded Moses in regard to the Levites, so they did to them.

23 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 24 This is the rule for the Levites. From twenty-five years of age up they shall participate in the work force in the service of the Tent of Meeting; 25 but at the age of fifty they shall retire from the work force and shall serve no more. 26 They may assist their brother Levites at the Tent of Meeting by standing guard, but they shall perform no labor. Thus you shall deal with the Levites in regard to their duties.

Chapter 9

1 The Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, on the first new moon of the second year following the exodus from the land of Egypt, saying: 2 Let the Israelite people offer the passover sacrifice at its set time: 3 you shall offer it on the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, at its set time; you shall offer it in accordance with all its rules and rites.

4 Moses instructed the Israelites to offer the passover sacrifice; 5 and they offered the passover sacrifice in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, in the wilderness of Sinai. Just as the Lord had commanded Moses, so the Israelites did. 6 But there were some men who were unclean by reason of a corpse and could not offer the passover sacrifice on that day. Appearing that same day before Moses and Aaron, 7 those men said to them, "Unclean though we are by reason of a corpse, why must we be debarred from presenting the Lord's offering at its set time with the rest of the Israelites?" 8 Moses said to them, "Stand by, and let me hear what instructions the Lord gives about you."

9 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 10 Speak to the Israelite people, saying: When any of you or of your posterity who are defiled by a corpse or are on a long journey would offer a passover sacrifice to the Lord, 11 they shall offer it in the second month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight. They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, 12 and they shall not leave any of it over until morning. They shall not break a bone of it. They shall offer it in strict accord with the law of the passover sacrifice. 13 But if a man who is clean and not on a journey refrains from offering the passover sacrifice, that person shall be cut off from his kin, for he did not present the Lord's offering at its set time; that man shall bear his guilt.

14 And when a stranger who resides with you would offer a passover sacrifice to the Lord, he must offer it in accordance with the rules and rites of the passover sacrifice. There shall be one law for you, whether stranger or citizen of the country.

15 On the day that the Tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered the Tabernacle, the Tent of the Pact; and in the evening it rested over the Tabernacle in the likeness of fire until morning. 16 It was always so: the cloud covered it, appearing as fire by night. 17 And whenever the cloud lifted from the Tent, the Israelites would set out accordingly; and at

the spot where the cloud settled, there the Israelites would make camp. 18 At a command of the Lord the Israelites broke camp, and at a command of the Lord they made camp: they remained encamped as long as the cloud stayed over the Tabernacle. 19 When the cloud lingered over the Tabernacle many days, the Israelites observed the Lord's mandate and did not journey on. 20 At such times as the cloud rested over the Tabernacle for but a few days, they remained encamped at a command of the Lord, and broke camp at a command of the Lord. 21 And at such times as the cloud stayed from evening until morning, they broke camp as soon as the cloud lifted in the morning. Day or night, whenever the cloud lifted, they would break camp. 22 Whether it was two days or a month or a year--however long the cloud lingered over the Tabernacle--the Israelites remained encamped and did not set out; only when it lifted did they break camp. 23 On a sign from the Lord they made camp and on a sign from the Lord they broke camp; they observed the Lord's mandate at the Lord's bidding through Moses.

Chapter 10

1 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Have two silver trumpets made; make them of hammered work. They shall serve you to summon the community and to set the divisions in motion. 3 When both are blown in long blasts, the whole community shall assemble before you at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting; 4 and if only one is blown, the chieftains, heads of Israel's contingents, shall assemble before you. 5 But when you sound short blasts, the divisions encamped on the east shall move forward; 6 and when you sound short blasts a second time, those encamped on the south shall move forward. Thus short blasts shall be blown for setting them in motion, 7 while to convoke the congregation you shall blow long blasts, not short ones. 8 The trumpets shall be blown by Aaron's sons, the priests; they shall be for you an institution for all time throughout the ages.

9 When you are at war in your land against an aggressor who attacks you, you shall sound short blasts on the trumpets, that you may be remembered before the Lord your God and be delivered from your enemies. 10 And on your joyous occasions--your fixed festivals and new moon days--you shall sound the trumpets over your burnt offerings and your sacrifices of well-being. They shall be a reminder of you before your God: I, the Lord, am your God.

11 In the second year, on the twentieth day of the second month, the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle of the Pact 12 and the Israelites set out on their journeys from the wilderness of Sinai. The cloud came to rest in the wilderness of Paran.

13 When the march was to begin, at the Lord's command through Moses, 14 the first standard to set out, troop by troop, was the division of Judah. In command of its troops was Nahshon son of Amminadab; 15 in command of the tribal troop of Issachar, Nethanel son of Zuar; 16 and in command of the tribal troop of Zebulun, Eliab son of Helon.

17 Then the Tabernacle would be taken apart; and the Gershonites and the Merarites, who carried the Tabernacle, would set out.

18 The next standard to set out, troop by troop, was the division of Reuben. In command of its troop was Elizur son of Shedeur; 19 in command of the tribal troop of Simeon, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai; 20 and in command of the tribal troop of Gad, Eliasaph son of Deuel.

21 Then the Kohathites, who carried the sacred objects, would set out; and by the time they arrived, the Tabernacle would be set up again.

22 The next standard to set out, troop by troop, was the division of Ephraim. In command of its troop was Elishama son of Ammihud; 23 in command of the tribal troop of Manasseh, Gamaliel son of Pedahzur; 24 and in command of the tribal troop of Benjamin, Abidan son of Gideoni.

25 Then, as the rear guard of all the divisions, the standard of the division of Dan would set out, troop by troop. In command of its troop was Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai; 26 in command of the tribal troop of Asher, Pagiël son of Ochran; 27 and in command of the tribal troop of Naphtali, Ahira son of Enan.

28 Such was the order of march of the Israelites, as they marched troop by troop.

29 Moses said to Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which the Lord has said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us and we will be generous with you; for the Lord has promised to be generous to Israel." 30 "I will not go," he replied to him, "but will return to my native land." 31 He said, "Please do not leave us, inasmuch as you know where we should camp in the wilderness and can be our guide. So if you come with us, we will extend to you the same bounty that the Lord grants us."

33 They marched from the mountain of the Lord a distance of three days. The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord traveled in front of them on that three days' journey to seek out a resting place for them; 34 and the Lord's cloud kept above them by day, as they moved on from camp.

35 When the Ark was to set out, Moses would say:

Advance, O Lord!
May Your enemies be scattered,
And may Your foes flee before You!
36 And when it halted, he would say:
Return, O Lord,
You who are Israel's myriads of thousands!

Chapter 11

1 The people took to complaining bitterly before the Lord. The Lord heard and was incensed: a fire of the Lord broke out against them, ravaging the outskirts of the camp. 2

The people cried out to Moses. Moses prayed to the Lord, and the fire died down. 3 That place was named Taberah, because a fire of the Lord had broken out against them.

4 The riffraff in their midst felt a gluttonous craving; and then the Israelites wept and said, "If only we had meat to eat! 5 We remember the fish that we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. 6 Now our gullets are shriveled. There is nothing at all! Nothing but this manna to look to!"

7 Now the manna was like coriander seed, and in color it was like bdellium. 8 The people would go about and gather it, grind it between millstones or pound it in a mortar, boil it in a pot, and make it into cakes. It tasted like rich cream. 9 When the dew fell on the camp at night, the manna would fall upon it.

10 Moses heard the people weeping, every clan apart, each person at the entrance of his tent. The Lord was very angry, and Moses was distressed. 11 And Moses said to the Lord, "Why have You dealt ill with Your servant, and why have I not enjoyed Your favor, that You have laid the burden of all this people upon me? 12 Did I conceive all this people, did I bear them, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries an infant,' to the land that You have promised on oath to their fathers? 13 Where am I to get meat to give to all this people, when they whine before me and say, 'Give us meat to eat!' 14 I cannot carry all this people by myself, for it is too much for me. 15 If You would deal thus with me, kill me rather, I beg You, and let me see no more of my wretchedness!"

16 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Gather for Me seventy of Israel's elders of whom you have experience as elders and officers of the people, and bring them to the Tent of Meeting and let them take their place there with you. 17 I will come down and speak with you there, and I will draw upon the spirit that is on you and put it upon them; they shall share the burden of the people with you, and you shall not bear it alone. 18 And say to the people: Purify yourselves for tomorrow and you shall eat meat, for you have kept whining before the Lord and saying, 'If only we had meat to eat! Indeed, we were better off in Egypt!' The Lord will give you meat and you shall eat. 19 You shall eat not one day, not two, not even five days or ten or twenty, 20 but a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you. For you have rejected the Lord who is among you, by whining before Him and saying, 'Oh, why did we ever leave Egypt!'"

21 But Moses said, "The people who are with me number six hundred thousand men; yet You say, 'I will give them enough meat to eat for a whole month.' 22 Could enough flocks and herds be slaughtered to suffice them? Or could all the fish of the sea be gathered for them to suffice them?" 23 And the Lord answered Moses, "Is there a limit to the Lord's power? You shall soon see whether what I have said happens to you or not!"

24 Moses went out and reported the words of the Lord to the people. He gathered seventy of the people's elders and stationed them around the Tent. 25 Then the Lord came down in a cloud and spoke to him; He drew upon the spirit that was on him and put it upon the

seventy elders. And when the spirit rested upon them, they spoke in ecstasy, but did not continue.

26 Two men, one named Eldad and the other Medad, had remained in camp; yet the spirit rested upon them — they were among those recorded, but they had not gone out to the Tent — and they spoke in ecstasy in the camp. 27 A youth ran out and told Moses, saying, "Eldad and Medad are acting the prophet in the camp!" 28 And Joshua son of Nun, Moses' attendant from his youth, spoke up and said, "My lord Moses, restrain them!" 29 But Moses said to him, "Are you wrought up on my account? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord put His spirit upon them!" 30 Moses then reentered the camp together with the elders of Israel.

31 A wind from the Lord started up, swept quail from the sea and strewed them over the camp, about a day's journey on this side and about a day's journey on that side, all around the camp, and some two cubits deep on the ground. 32 The people set to gathering quail all that day and night and all the next day — even he who gathered least had ten homers — and they spread them out all around the camp. 33 The meat was still between their teeth, nor yet chewed, when the anger of the Lord blazed forth against the people and the Lord struck the people with a very severe plague. 34 That place was named Kibroth-hattaavah, because the people who had the craving were buried there.

35 Then the people set out from Kibroth-hattaavah for Hazereth.

Chapter 12

1 When they were in Hazereth, Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman he had married: "He married a Cushite woman!"

2 They said, "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?" The Lord heard it. 3 Now Moses was a very humble man, more so than any other man on earth. 4 Suddenly the Lord called to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the Tent of Meeting." So the three of them went out. 5 The Lord came down in a pillar of cloud, stopped at the entrance of the Tent, and called out, "Aaron and Miriam!" The two of them came forward; 6 and He said, "Hear these My words: When a prophet of the Lord arises among you, I make Myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream. 7 Not so with My servant Moses; he is trusted throughout My household. 8 With him I speak mouth to mouth, plainly and not in riddles, and he beholds the likeness of the Lord. How then did you not shrink from speaking against My servant Moses!" 9 Still incensed with them, the Lord departed. 10 As the cloud withdrew from the Tent, there was Miriam stricken with snow-white scales! When Aaron turned toward Miriam, he saw that she was stricken with scales. 11 And Aaron said to Moses, "O my lord, account not to us the sin which we committed in our folly. 12 Let her not be as one dead, who emerges from his mother's womb with half his flesh eaten away." 13 So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, "O God, pray heal her!"

14 But the Lord said to Moses, "If her father spat in her face, would she not bear her shame for seven days? Let her be shut out of camp for seven days, and then let her be

readmitted." 15 So Miriam was shut out of camp seven days; and the people did not march on until Miriam was readmitted. 16 After that the people set out from Hazeroth and encamped in the wilderness of Paran.