



2017 Annual Meeting & Community Gathering

Drash for Behaalotcha by Rabbi Chai Levy

In this week's Torah portion, Behaalotcha

We are in the midbar, making our way slowly through the wilderness towards the promised land, and it's not easy.

The Israelites are crying and complaining – I know it's hard to imagine ☺ -

“there's nothing to eat! Remember how good it was back in Egypt (when we were slaves!?)

Remember the fish, the melons, the cucumbers?” they say.

Moses is very distressed, and he goes to God and says,

“Oy, why have you done this to me?

Why have you put this impossible burden on me?”

And he uses a very interesting maternal image, saying to God – (Num 11:12)

Did I conceive these people? Did I give birth to them?

That You should say to me: Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries a baby?

It's kind of funny – it's like Moses is saying to God –

a mom, a nurse might be able to handle all this, but me, forget it,

this is way too much.

God responds by reminding Moses of the very thing that his father-in-law, Yitro told him – it's too much for one person, one person cannot run a whole community. It has to be a group effort!

And God tells Moses to share the work of managing the community with 70 elders. It's the same message he got back in Exodus in from Yitro who said:

You can't do it alone. It's not good for you OR for the community.

Spread out the work among chiefs and judges (Exodus 18)

This is the Torah's message about a healthy, functioning community.

There is no one person who can do all the work, no matter how skilled.

It's best for the community when the work is shared,

when many people are empowered to carry the burden.

I'd say to Moses – not even a mom, not even a nurse, can do it all!

And this is what we celebrate this evening at Kol Shofar:

We honor volunteers, like Susan Schneider and like all the people whose names you see on the screen, and we note all the work – done by so many different people - that goes into making this community healthy.

No one can do it alone: Yitro says it, God says it, and Moses realizes it.

It takes a village. It takes a whole community of dedicated people

contributing their time and energy.

Which we are so blessed to have here in the Kol Shofar community:

Staff, board members, committee members, organizers, leaders, volunteers.

All giving so much of themselves to make this community possible and to make all the holy work we do here happen.



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There is one other part of this week's parasha I want to mention.

The man, the manna. Every day the manna would fall,
and the Israelites would be nourished in the desert.

We usually think of the manna as a gift from God,
Something WE receive, to feed US.

But in his commentary on this parasha, Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev
Explains that the giving of manna is reciprocal, the giving goes in both directions.
How so? What could be the other direction?

Levi Yitzhak explains: The manna gave PHYSICAL sustenance to the Israelites,
But the Israelites actually gave SPIRITUAL nourishment to the manna – how so?

The manna had no taste on its own (it was kind of like tofu),
it only took on the flavor that the particular person eating it gave to it.

So the manna gave the Israelites PHYSICAL NOURISHMENT
But the Israelites gave the manna something SPIRITUAL – its flavor.

(such an odd but interesting idea)

So, too, Levi Yitzhak teaches: When someone gives of themselves,
they are giving of their PHYSICAL resources, like the manna,
but they are receiving back something SPIRITUAL,
some kind of spiritual flavor, so to speak.

So many people make this community happen

So many people giving of themselves in various ways

And, Levi Yitzhak would say, even in the act of giving abundantly,
like the manna GAVE to the Israelites,

there is something to be RECEIVED, like the Israelites gave the manna flavor.

It is my hope and prayer that

as we recognize the many abundant ways that

so many give to maintain this community that

we also delight in the many tastes and flavors that

we receive and enjoy from being part of Kol Shofar.

Take a moment to taste and to savor your Kol Shofar community:

You all give so much, you do the work to make this place happen, but also -

What flavor does it have for you? What do you receive?