



Shabbat Shalom

Behaalotcha

Numbers 8:1 - 12:15

God has always been leading us towards Redemption, and ever since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, we have eagerly awaited the completion of the process.

And whenever the ark set out, Moses said, 'Arise, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you.' And when it rested, he said, 'Return, O Lord, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel. (Numbers 10:35- 36)

In the Hebrew text, there is an inverted Hebrew letter “nun” placed before and after these two verses, a one-of-a-kind symbol in the Scriptures. Clearly, these two verses are meant to be set apart, to draw our attention to something dramatic.

And, in fact, these verses mark a highlight in the experience of the Children of Israel in the desert. Until this point, we have read of the counting of the Children of Israel, of the dedication of the Tabernacle and the procession of the camp, as each tribe gathers around its flag. Revelation at Sinai happened the year before, God has forgiven His people after the sin of the golden calf, the Tabernacle has been built and dedicated, the priests have been instructed in their duties and the camp is organized and ready to march. And in fact, these two verses signify their marching orders. We have already learned that the camp travels only when the holy cloud is lifted, and here, Moses calls upon God to rise up, to lift the cloud and the nation will march forward, into the Land of Israel.

The journey should only take 11 days. They have already traveled 3 days (Numbers 10:33). But with the opening verse of Chapter 11, everything begins to crash. The nation complains repeatedly and is punished. Miriam speaks ill of her brother and his wife and is punished. And then, of course, comes the sin of the spies, resulting in the most severe punishment of all – an entire generation would die in the desert and never see the Promised Land.

These two verses promise what could have been. These two verses echo the trumpets that were about to be sounded and the royal procession that would have brought the Nation of Israel into the Land of Israel within weeks. Instead, it would be 38 more years.

The State of Israel was established in 1948 among much fanfare and trumpet-blowing, both the trumpets of war (unfortunately) and the trumpets of God's miracles. Ever since, we have eagerly awaited the completion of the process, the final resting in the Land of Israel, in peace with our neighbors. But so many things went wrong. So many of our people did not really understand the spiritual significance of these events. We are ready to march forward, but God may be putting a hold on the procession for now. Will we have to wait a generation until we proceed? We don't know. But we must continue reading these verses, calling upon God to rise and lead us into the Promised Land, for even if there is a delay, He will surely lead us on to redemption.