

## **Shabbat Bahalotcha 5780/2020**

### **TBT Dvar Torah By Ezra N. Rich**

Zachor. Remember,

A few years ago, my dear friend and his wife told me they were expecting. It was wonderful news and after asking how she was feeling, I asked the due date. "November 29<sup>th</sup>," she replied. When I said she should start choosing some Israeli names, she gave me a puzzled look.

As you may know, November 29, 1947 was the day that the United Nations voted on the partition of Palestine, it paved the way for the subsequent creation of the Jewish State, Israel, the following spring. There even is Rechov 29 November, or 29 November Street in Jerusalem because it was such a momentous day. I knew that because my late grandmother, A"H, the original Miriam Rich, shared her memories as a teenager being with her family, everyone glued to the radio and writing down the votes as the member nations weighed in. I feel a personal connection to that day through her.

In this week's Torah portion, as per the broader book of Bamidbar, Numbers, and throughout Tanach, we see both the piety and greatness of our ancestors, as well as their shortcomings. In the parshah we have inspiring descriptions about observing Pesach, the glory of the Mishkan and the Shofar blasts, verses we cite during the Torah service and liturgy on Rosh Hashanah and at the Seder.

We also have the Israelites being difficult. They complain that the Man, the manna isn't as tasty as the food they ate in Egypt, a complaint that led to divine wrath, as well as the criticism that Miriam shared with Aharon about Moshe. While the commentators debate if Miriam was confiding in Aharon out of concern for Moshe's domestic situation or because she wanted more power, what is clear is that she is punished for it.

In fact, Miriam's behavior is later highlighted in Deuteronomy, "Zachor es asher asah Hashem Elokecha L'Miriam Baderech Btztzchah Mimitzrayim. Remember, what the Lord your God did to Miriam on the way out of Egypt. This is one of the six remembrances that some people recite after morning services, joining the ranks of mega-mitzvot. The other five are remembering the Exodus, the revelation at Sinai, Amalek, the Golden Calf and the Shabbat. Miriam's behavior is the only one concerning an individual and her fellow. The others are community-level remembrances, obviously with personal responsibility, but they reference things concerning all of Israel. This was a sibling situation. It was all in the family. Our sages see this as punishment for not giving Moshe the benefit of the doubt or not appreciating how great he was. Indeed, the next verse notes that he was the most humble man.

I believe that Miriam's actions and this call to remember, Zachor, is something sacred that we all can embrace, especially during this time when the world seems so troubled. Moving from Miriam, my oldest daughter to my middle one, Sivan - she was born during the Torah portion where we read one of my favorite verses, Devarim/Deuteronomy 32:7 Zachor yemos olam, binu shnos dor vador, Remember the days of old, consider the years of ages past. And please take this one to heart, my fellow TBTer, "Shala Avicha Viyagedcha, Zikenecha V'yomru lach, Ask your father, he'll inform you, your elders, they will tell you." I cried when I read this verse at Sivan's Simchat Bat because I was discussing those who she was named after, including a World War II veteran. I noted that we're at a time when those who liberated the concentration camps and our Holocaust survivors are passing on and the responsibility that we have to honor their lofty legacies and pass it on to the next generation.

Zachor. Remember.

During this time when we're physically distant, we've likely been reflecting on challenges from the past as well as the Seder or the summer vacations of years gone by. These stories and memories are special. Please tell them to your children and your grandchildren. I was blessed that both of my grandmothers, who were both named Miriam, as well as other older people in my life shared some of their history with me. My Grandmother always emphasized to me that I needed to know where I came from and how to carry myself, as keys to being successful in life.

We need to share our story with our children and grandchildren and those that we love. These stories are part of our Mesorah, our tradition, linking us in the chain that takes us back to the days of old.

Shabbat Shalom.