

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, June 4:

..BEHAALOTEKHA: Numbers 8:1-12:16

..HAFTARAH: Zechariah 2:14-4:7

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

SEXUAL LOVE in matrimony is sacred. "Ona" – Hebrew term for regular love-making – indicates the idea of responsiveness and responsibility. The lover "answers" his beloved; they "respond" to each other. Physical embracement becomes spiritual "communication." "Ona" is a man's duty. Torah teaches man to be responsive to the needs, desire, dependency and vulnerability of his woman; to respect her feelings and be considerate in the act of intercourse. A husband, in Judaism, has no possessive rights on his wife's body, nor on any conjugal dues. The woman has a right to refuse his advances, if so she feels. Love-making is consecrated by mutual passion and desire to afford each other full gratification. Pleasure is a primary goal of sexual union. "If it is without an abundance of mutual lust, love and will," says the author of "Iggeret Ha-Kodesh" (13th c.), "it is also without the Divine Presence." Moses, by dint of his unique prophetic role, abstained from "ona." For this he was criticized, but excused. (Numbers 12:12). The rule for all is responsible sexuality, experienced in sanctity.

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

THE NER TAMID (perpetual lamp) is a significant artifact in the synagogue. Prominently placed within the sanctuary, it sheds its light constantly. This light is a symbolic reminder of the menorah in the ancient Temple. Originally, the Ner Tamid was placed on the western wall in the synagogue in remembrance of the position of the menorah in the Temple. This position of the Ner Tamid also underlined the rabbinic legend that the "western lamp" of the menorah (*ner ma'aravi*), during the glorious days of antiquity, was never extinguished; similarly, the Western Wall of the Temple (*kotel ma'aravi*), even after its Destruction, was never completely demolished. In the course of time, however, the Ner Tamid was moved from the west to the east: In the modern day synagogue, it is suspended from the ceiling in front of the Aron Kodesh (holy ark). It is generally crafted by an artist which helps to make the Ark the focus of the congregants' attention. The Ner Tamid, (sometimes called "eternal light") has nothing to do with the remembrance of death. Its light is a celebration of life—enhancing the sense of beauty and sanctity in the synagogue.

Candlelight time 8:42 Sabbath ends 9:35
Scriptural reading for Saturday, June 12:
BEHA ALOTECHA: Numbers 8:1-12:16
HAFTARAH: Zechariah 2:14-4:7

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

“A SCORCHED BRANCH SAVED FROM FIRE” (“ud mutzal me’esh”) is how prophet Zechariah (3:2) depicts Joshua the high priest (c. 520 BCE). Joshua was the spiritual leader of the newly emerging Jewish community in Judea at the beginning of shivat-Zion (return to Zion and rebuilding its Temple). He was subject, however, to harsh criticism: Presumably he did not protest enough when his own children intermarried; or, worse, did not impress others as being properly pious. At any rate, the prophet reveals abundant love and support for the accused; after all, he is a holocaust survivor: he and his family went through the devouring fire of slaughter and destruction, his father exiled, his grandfather executed, his priestly schoolmates all perished in flames, and he alone remained to return from Babylon to his homeland a burned remnant. In prophetic imagery, Joshua’s ordeal is dramatized by the mythical figure of Satan, the celestial Accuser, ready to instigate, while the accused is “clad in filthy garments,” symbolizing his degradation and guilt. Satan is firmly dismissed and rebuked. As for Joshua, the accused, “Take off his filthy garments!” sounds the Divine call to all around him. And to him: Behold, I have removed from you your guilt and am bedecking you with adorning cloth.” This is the enduring message to all survivors, whoever is “a scorched branch saved from fire.”

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, June 16:

..BEHAALOTEKHA: Numbers 8:1-12:16

..HAFTARAH: Zechariah 2:14-4:7

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

THE GRAPE-VINE AND THE FIG-TREE (gefen u-te'ena), among the Seven varieties by which the Land of Israel is praised (Deut. 8:8), became in biblical imagery symbols of national success. The grape-vine, with its bending and curly tendrils, and the fig-tree, with its stretching and leafy branches, both providing luscious nourishment and refreshing shade during the heat of the summer, convey an idyllic picture of national prosperity and tranquility. Thus the sense of peace and security during Solomon's reign is depicted (I Kings 5:5): "Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his grape-vine and under his fig-tree." So does Micah envision the future (4:4): "They shall sit every man under his grape-vine and under his fig-tree, and none shall terrorize them." A new dimension to this messianic vision—a sense of love and comradeship—is added by Zechariah (3:10): "On that day, says the Lord of hosts, shall you invite one another under the grape-vine and under the fig-tree." In this verse, the Hebrew nouns "gefen" and "te'ena" (grape-vine and fig-tree) appear without possessive suffixes. In their state of peaceful affluence, the people will share their joy and enjoyment with each other. Political and economic security will bring spiritual refinement and social integrity.

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, May 31:
BEHAALOTEKHA: Numbers 8:1-12:16
HAFTARAH: Zechariah 2:14-4:7

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, June 19:
BEHAALOTEKHA: Numbers 8:1-12:16
HAFTARAH: Zechariah 2:14-4:7

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

THE GREAT SANHEDRIN, the supreme authority of Judaism until the Second Destruction (70 CE), consisted of 71 members. Its biblical source is traced to Israel's wandering in the desert. When Moses complained that his burden as leader was unbearable, God responded (Nu. 11:16-17): "Assemble before Me 70 men of the elders of the people...and I will transmit to them from the spirit conferred on you." (With Moses there were 71 members). This institution, known only later by its Greek name of Sanhedrion, or Sanhedrin, was the highest legislative and judicial council of the Jews and the final authority in Jewish law and teachings. The future restoration of the Sanhedrin in the land of Israel has always been an elemental part of Jewish messianic vision. During the 16th century an attempt was made by the rabbis in Safed to renew the Sanhedrin, but it failed. Napoleon's so-called Sanhedrin of 71 Jewish leaders, in Paris in 1807, bore no resemblance in substance and in scope to the original and hoped-for court, except in name and number. The authority of the Sanhedrin, in the past and in the future, is traced to Moses who received the Torah from Sinai.

Friday, May 31, 1991

OF THE WEEK

By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

THE ELUSIVENESS OF SPIRITUALITY: The 70 elders attained a high level of spirituality through emanation (*atzilut*) from their Master, Moses (Nu. 11:25): "(God) caused the spirit imparted on Moses to come forth and be bestowed upon the 70 elders. When the spirit descended on them, they gained the gift of prophecy." Now, did these elders keep their fortuitous gift of prophecy with them or did they eventually lose it?

Torah uses an ambiguous phrase ("*velo-yasafu*"), which may either mean that the elders did not *continue* to maintain their spiritual attainment (*Rashi, Sifre*), or that they never *stopped* maintaining it (*Targum*). The ambiguity of Torah's style points to the elusiveness of spiritual attainment: How difficult it is to maintain or even ascertain. A lesson in humility and self-awareness: Never be complacent and never boast of your alleged spiritual attainments. You can never be sure whether you truly ever had them; or, if you did, whether you still have them or already lost them.

THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

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By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

ANAVA (humility, modesty) is ascribed to Moses. This great leader, transmitter of Torah from Sinai, was nonetheless “very modest (*anav*), more so than any person on the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:13). The true “*anav*” is modest, not meek; humble, not timid. Nor does one who is “*anav*” lack in self-esteem. Well aware of one’s own worth, he graciously acknowledges his virtues. Such a person does not boast nor indulge in self-glorification. True modesty stems from a sense of duty and self-respect. One who possess these qualities is not dazzled by one’s own merits and achievements. From the Ethics of the Fathers (2:9): “If you studied much Torah, do not pride yourself; given that for this purpose you have been created.”

The elusiveness of the gift of spirituality is illustrated in the story of the 70 elders. They attained a high level of spirituality through ema-

nation (*atzilut*) from their Master Moses (Numbers 11:25): “(God) caused the spirit imparted on Moses to emanate, and be bestowed upon the 70 elders. When the spirit descended on them, they gained the gift of prophecy.” Now, did these elders keep their fortuitous gift of prophecy with them or did they eventually lose it?

Indicatively Torah uses an ambiguous phrase (“*velo-yasafu*”), which may either mean that they did not continue to maintain their spiritual attainment (Rashi, Sifre), or that they never stopped maintaining it (Targum). The ambiguity of Torah’s style points to the elusiveness of spiritual attainment. How difficult it is to obtain it, and how uncertain to maintain it. A lesson in humility and self-awareness: Never be complacent and never boast of your alleged spiritual attainments. You can never be sure whether you truly ever had them; or, if you did, whether you still have them or already lost them.

THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

THE ELUSIVENESS OF SPIRITUALITY: The 70 elders attained a high level of spirituality through *atzilut* (emanation) from their master, Moses (Numbers 11:25): "(God) caused the spirit imparted on Moses to emanate and be bestowed upon the 70 elders. When the spirit descended on them, they gained the gift of prophecy." Did these elders keep their fortuitous gift of prophecy or did they eventually lose it?

Torah uses an ambiguous phrase, "*velo-yasafu*," which may either mean that they did not continue to maintain their spiritual attainment (Rashi, Sifre), or that they never stopped maintaining it (Targum). The ambiguity points to the elusiveness of spiritual attainment: How difficult is it to maintain it, how uncertain to ascertain it? A lesson in humility and self-awareness: Never be complacent and never boast of your alleged spiritual attain-

ments. You can never be sure whether you truly ever had them; or, if you did, whether you still have them.

THE VIRTUE OF MOSES' PROPHECY AND HUMILITY. Torah makes a distinction between two degrees of Divine revelation, or prophetic communication. Both are defined by words which are identically spelled but differently pronounced, *M-R-A-H*. All prophets envision a reflection, as if through a "mirror" (*mar'ah*); Moses envisions more clearly, as if through an open, "see-through window" (*mar'eh*). Hence, Torah concludes (Deuteronomy: 34:10): "No prophet has arisen in Israel like Moses, whom God knew face to face!" Moses is the father and epitome of prophecy. In similar terms, Torah speaks about Moses' modesty (12:3): "The person (*ish*) Moshe was very humble (*anav*), more than any other person (*adam*) on the face of the earth (*adama*)."

THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

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CLEVELAND JEWISH NEWS / JUNE 4, 1999

RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

PROPHECY AND MODESTY (*nevu'ah* and *anava*) are two of Moses' outstanding qualities. On Moses' prophecy, Torah distinguishes between two levels of Divine revelation based on the degree of visionary clarity. Both are defined by words that are written identically but pronounced differently (*m-r-a-h*). All prophets see through a reflection, a "mirror" (*mar'ah*): Moses' view is transparent, as if through a "see-through" window (*Mar'eh*). Hence, Torah (Deuteronomy; 34:10) concludes: "No prophet has arisen in Israel like Moses, whom God knew face to face!" In Judaism, Moses is the father of the prophets.

Similarly Torah describes Moses' modesty (12:3): "The man (*ish*) Moses was very modest (*anav*), more so than any other mortal (*adam*) on the face of the earth (*adama*)." Unlike some other religions, Judaism is content with its central figure being fully and "just" human.

Avot (2:9): "Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai received the oral tradition from Hillel and Sammai: He used to say: If you have learned Torah, do not claim credit for yourself, because for this purpose you were created."

The study of Torah is meritorious and Torah erudition is a source of pride. Yet, Torah learning gives no one justification for arrogance and self-righteousness. In essence, Ben-Zakkai says to his students: Torah is the purpose of your life. By studying, you are just doing your duty. Only if you underestimate yourself and the value of Torah, you tend to brag. When you acknowledge your role, you are compelled to be modest.

THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

"SPEAKING TO A PERSON'S HEART" is a biblical idiom for speaking with appeal and conviction, touching the person's feelings and winning the listener's will. The prophet Hosea uses this phrase in describing the courtship of a woman by her lover, as metaphor for God's loving pursuance of Israel (2:16-17):

Behold, I will allure her:

Lead her into the desert,

Speak to her heart,

Then give her the vineyards!

This "wooing" scene, in three stages, is an allegory for God's espousal of His people Israel. The first stage is the Exodus, "leading her into the desert." The second is the revelation of Torah, "speaking to her heart." The third is the gift of the land, "giving her the vineyards."

The central stage, in both the romantic love between man and woman and celestial love between God and the people, is the tender communication between the lovers. In Judaism, Torah is

Thought of the Week

By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

WHEN THE "ARON" (Ark), the portable box containing the Torah, would be carried during the people's journey, Moses would say (Numbers 10:35-36): "Arise, O Lord! Let your enemies vanish; Your foes flee before Your Presence!" And when it would be put in place, he would say: "Return, O Lord, to the myriads of Israel's thousands!"

These verses are recited in the Synagogue whenever the Torah Scroll is taken from and returned to the Ark. They teach us that there is no power in the sacred object itself, the Ark or the Scroll, but in God alone. True victory is achieved not by demolition of the enemy, but by revelation of God – when enemy and animosity disappear before His Presence.

Candlelight time 8:40 Sabbath ends 9:44
Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, June 8:
BEHAALOTEKHA: Numbers 8:1-12:16
HAFTARAH: Zechariah 2:14-4:7

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

THE NER TAMID (perpetual lamp) is a significant artifact in the synagogue. Prominently placed within the sanctuary, it sheds its light constantly. This light is a symbolic reminder of the menorah in the ancient Temple. Originally, the Ner Tamid was placed on the western wall in the synagogue in remembrance of the position of the menorah in the Temple. This position of the Ner Tamid also underlined the rabbinic legend that the "western lamp" of the menorah (*ner ma'aravi*), during the glorious days of antiquity, was never extinguished; similarly, the Western Wall of the Temple (*kotel ma'aravi*), even after its Destruction, was never completely demolished. In the course of time, however, the Ner Tamid was moved from the west to the east: In the modern day synagogue, it is suspended from the ceiling in front of the Aron Kodesh (holy ark). It is generally crafted by an artist which helps to make the Ark the focus of the congregants' attention. The Ner Tamid, (sometimes called "eternal light") has nothing to do with the remembrance of death. Its light is a celebration of life—enhancing the sense of beauty and sanctity in the synagogue.

Candlelight time 8:42 Sabbath ends 9:35
Scriptural reading for Saturday, June 12:
BEHA ALOTECHA: Numbers 8:1-12:16
2:14-4:7
HAFTARAH: Zechariah 2.

06/12/71

Candlelight time 8:42, Sabbath ends 9:35

Scriptural Reading for Saturday
morning, June 12:

BEHAALOSECHA: Numbers 8:1-12:16

HAFTARAH: Zechariah 2:14-4:7

.. THOUGHT OF THE WEEK: Moses' intercession in behalf of his sick sister Miriam (Nu. 12:13) is remarkably brief: "God, I entreat You, heal her." Why did Moses not engage in elaborate prayer? When a man is in trouble, say the rabbis, it is not the right time for his friends to offer lengthy prayers. Rather, let them attend to his immediate needs and actually help him. The Exodus story present an instructive analogy. The Israelites were standing before Yam Suf (the Sea of Reeds): "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Why do you cry out to Me? Tell the Israelites to fo forward' " (Ex. 14:15). The divine message is amply dramatized by Rabbi Eliezer (circ. 130): "My children are in trouble; the sea is closing, the enemey chasing, and you stand there reciting long prayers?" (Mechilta) Crisis is to be met by realistic and constructive human inventiveness and action. Prayer is no substitute for man's prime responsibility to cope with and master his own life condition. In Judaism, the act of prayer ("hitpalel," meaning self-exploration), far from being an escaping or soothing device, is an awakening force for human awarness and involvement. The lesson: When in trouble let our prayers be meaningful and brief and our deeds helpful and thorough.

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

Candlelight time 8:40 Sabbath ends 9:33

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, June 8:

BEHAALOTEKHA: Numbers 8:1-12:16

HAFTARAH: Zechariah 2:14-4:7

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

MOSES' SONG OF THE ARK (Num. 10:35-36) is composed of two short verses: "As the Ark set forward, Moses would say: 'Arise, O Lord, and be your foes dispersed, Your adversaries fleeing, at Your presence!' And as it rested, he would say: 'Repose (shuva) O Lord, amongst the myriads and thousands of Israel!'" The Song of the Ark is addressed to the Lord. Moses does not even mention the Ark. Carried through Israel's advancement towards the Promised Land and its conquest, the Ark, the actual storage of the inscribed Torah, has served as symbol and demonstration of the Divine Presence. In itself it is neither deified nor glorified. The first verse of the Ark Song, thus, envisions victory over the enemy as being a direct result of Divine manifestation, and not of magical supremacy or human aggression. The Ark proceeds, but God, only He, arises triumphant. The resting of the Ark evokes the imagery of restoration and serenity. "Shuva," here is more than a call for return and response; it means tranquility and stability. The second verse, thus, expresses the idea of God's dwelling amidst the multitudes of the people. Not the static, physical Ark, but rather the living, striving people are the real bearers of the Divine Will; they are the Chariots of His Presence.

Candlelight time 8:34 Sabbath ends 9:28

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, May 31:

BEHAALOTEKHA: Numbers 8:1-12:16

HAFTARAH: Zechariah 2:14-4:7

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

THE MENORAH (lampstand of seven branches), an outstanding symbol of Judaism, has its origin in Israel's ancient temples, both the "Mishkan" (the portable one in the Sinai desert) and the "Mikdash" (the permanent one in Jerusalem). Consisting of a base and a shaft with three branches on each side and one in the center—all seven lamps with "cups like almond blossoms, knobs and flowers" — the Menorah in its entirety was fashioned out of one solid piece of gold. All seven lamps arrayed evenly in one straight line, their flames were directed towards one central point. How so? The wickmouths, from which the flame emerges, of the six lamps on both sides of the Menorah were facing the central lamp (Ex. 25:37; Nu. 8:2). The Menorah lamps, constantly burning "from evening to morning" (Ex. 27:31), were daily tended and furnished with new and pure olive oil. The Destruction of 70 CE put a tragic end to the glory and ritual of the Temple. The Arch of Titus in Rome, depicting the parade of captives and spoils from this destruction, conspicuously represents the Menorah. With the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948, the Menorah became its prominent symbol.

THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

WHO WAS MOSES' "KUSHITE" WOMAN? Torah (Numbers 12:1) reveals that Moses took (married) a Kushite woman (*isha kushit*), namely, an Ethiopian woman from Kush. This infuriated his brother and sister. Why?

Legend has it that after he escaped from Egypt, Moses became a king in Ethiopia and married an Ethiopian princess. The Aramaic *Targum Yonatan ben Uziel* elaborates: Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses concerning the affair of the Kushite woman. She was the queen of Kush whom the Kushites gave Moses as wife when he escaped from pharaoh. His brother, Aaron, and sister, Miriam, were incensed because now Moses divorced her.

In biblical culture, a dark-skinned woman would be considered very attractive. Hence, *isha kushit* could be

a metaphor for a beautiful woman. So translates the Aramaic *Targum Onkelos*: Moses married a beautiful woman. Both translations, however, add (what is not written) that the contentious issue was not the marriage but rather the separation – namely that Moses divorced (ignored or dismissed) his beautiful woman.

Following the Aramaic *Targumim*, Rashi claims that this beautiful "Kushite" woman was Zipora the Midianite.

Because of Moses' elevated level of prophecy, he was supposed to be celibate, Rashi explains. But Moses' siblings disagreed; they felt he was no more a prophet than they. So why does he not live with his spouse as all of us are supposed to do?

Miriam and Aaron spoke improperly (*leshon hara*) against their brother. Their conduct is condemned by Torah.

THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

BEHAALOTEKHA

June 16, 1995

ANAVA (humility, modesty) is ascribed to Moses. This great leader, father of all prophets, transmitter of Torah from Sinai, was nonetheless "very modest, more so than any person on the face of the earth" (Nu. 12:13).

The true *anav* is modest, not meek; humble, not timid. He is neither shy nor diffident, but rather confident and assertive. Nor does the *anav* lack in self-esteem. A person of true *anava* is well aware of his/her own worth, and graciously acknowledges his/her virtues; but does so without boast and with no self-glorification.

True *anava* stems from a sense of duty and self-respect; one possessing these qualities is not dazzled by one's own merits and achievements. Such a person faces them with responsibility and humility, rather than arrogance or self-righteousness.

From the Ethics of the Fathers (2:9): "If you have learned much Torah, do not pride yourself; since you have been created for this purpose," Attaining excellence is not to be regarded as one's deviation from the norm but expected as one's fulfillment of one's duty.

Thought of the Week**Rabbi Zvi Yehuda****BEHAALOTEKHA**

June 19, 1992

ANAVA (humility, modesty) is ascribed to Moses. This great leader, father of all prophets, transmitter of Torah from Sinai, was nonetheless "very modest, more so than any person on the face of the earth" (Nu. 12:13). The true *anav* is modest, not meek; humble, not timid. He is neither shy nor diffident, but rather confident and assertive. Nor does the *anav* lack in self-esteem. He is well aware of his own worth, and graciously acknowledges his virtues; but without boast and without self-glorification. True *anava* stems from a sense of duty and self-respect; one possessing these qualities is not dazzled by one's merits and achievements. Such a person faces them with responsibility and humility, not arrogance. From the Ethics of the Fathers (2:9): "If you learned much Torah, do not pride yourself; since for this purpose you have been created.

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

ANAVA (humility, modesty) is ascribed to Moses. This great leader, father of all prophets, Receiver of Torah from Sinai, was nonetheless (Nu. 12:13), "very modest, more so than any person on the face of the earth." The true *anavis* modest, not meek; humble, not timid. He is neither shy nor diffident, but rather confident and assertive. Nor does the *anav* lack in self-esteem. He is well aware of his own worth, and graciously acknowledges his virtues; but without boast, without self-glorification.

True *anava* stems from self-assurance and self-respect. A self-assured person, respecting himself, demands and expects more of himself; he is not dazzled by his merits and achievements. He faces them with responsibility and humility, not arrogance. From the Ethics of the Fathers (2:9):

If you learned much Torah, do not pride yourself; since for this purpose you have been created.

Candlelight time 8:40 Sabbath ends 9:34
Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, June 11:
BEHAALOTEKHA: Numbers 8:1-12:16
HAFTARAH: Zechariah 2:14-4:7

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

WAS MOSES MEEK? Torah attests (Nu. 12:3) that "Moses the man was very humble ('anav'), more than any person on the face of the earth." Understood in context, this verse explains Moses' forbearance when slanderous remarks were made against him by his sister and brother. God, so says the previous verse, "heard" and forcefully reacted. But Moses, being a refined person ("ish"), did not. Moses' meekness is seen and explicitly noticed in this limited incident only, concerning a personal matter. In his role of leadership, however, vigorously fighting for freedom and justice, Moses was far from meek. While humility has its place, misguided meekness is disguised weakness and breeds wickedness. So teaches Sefer Hassidim (13th century): "There is meekness which is wrong and corruptive, as when a person, in order to be agreeable, fails to protest or correct his children's and students' bad behavior; keeps silence when justice is mis-carried; or refrains from getting involved - escaping responsibility and basking in his meekness. Among the virtues of the ideal leader, the Psalmist (45:5) mentions "righteousness meekness," thus indicating that there is meekness which is unrighteous." Privately, as an individual ("ish"), Moses was meek; not so as a leader. Powerful and strong, his prophetic rage burned with the fire of determination and persistence, without being consumed.

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

WAS MOSES MEEK? According to the current translations, Torah attests that he was. In Numbers (12:3): "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men upon the face of the earth." But with his powerful and assertive leadership, his toughness and fury in moments of crisis, it is hard to picture Moses as the meekest man on the face of the earth. Moses emerges in the biblical narrative as forceful and imposing, not spineless or submissive. He was not meek; nor does his Torah preach meekness. The Hebrew term which describes Moses' virtue as *anav*. Rather than meek or humble this term means: modest, unassuming, unpretentious. The *anav* in Jewish tradition lacks neither self-esteem nor pride and dignity. Aware of his qualities and achievements, he is not boastful of them; he considers them a normal expression of human duty, and claims no special credit for them. The *anav* carries his self-respect with stately modesty. This modesty, says Rokeah (13th century), "is the noblest of all ornaments." Far from meek, Moses was the model of modesty—the supreme *anav*.

Editor's note: Rabbi Yehuda's Thought of the Week was inadvertently omitted in last week's CJN.

Candlelight time 8:42 Sabbath ends 9:36

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, June 13:

BEHAALOTEKHA: Numbers 8:1-12:16

HAFTARAH: Zechariah 2:14-4:7

to our Creator.”

THOU

MAY 27, 1994 41

RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

TO BE VOCAL OR SILENT? In Zechariah's poetic portrayal of Israel's redemption (2:14-27), God's return to dwell amidst His people begins with a call to the people to become vocal and ends with a call to all humanity to keep silent. First, "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion!" Then, "Be silent (*hus*) all mortals, before the Lord!" Understandable is the vocal jubilation of the people, but why the hush of all mortals? The idiom "all mortals" (*kol basar*; all flesh) seems to include the "daughter of Zion" (Israel), the redeemed and jubilant people. Why the silence after the rejoicing? Is it the stillness of resignation or the speechlessness of awe before the Divine Presence?

The people must temper their exuberant rejoicing with the humility of silence, insists the prophet, lest jubilation lead to arrogance and joy become euphoric. True joy culminates in voiceless devotion. No word, no sound. There is a time to be vocal and a time to be silent. At the time of redemption, envisions the prophet, our people will rightly and expectedly burst into cries of joy; so, "Sing and rejoice!" Then, however, in due modesty before God, "Hush!"

Thought of the Week

By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

TO BE VOCAL OR SILENT? Zechariah's portrayal of Israel's redemption (2:14-27) begins with a call to the people to be vocal – "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion!" – and ends with a call to humanity to keep silent: "Hush, all mortals, before the Lord!" Why the silence of all mortals – which surely includes the rejoicing, redeemed people -- after the vocal jubilation of redemption?

The people's jubilation must be tempered with the humility of silence, lest it become arrogant. At the time of redemption, envisions the prophet, you will burst into cries of joy – "Sing and rejoice!" But, in mortal modesty before God, "Hush!" This is speechlessness of devotion, stillness of awe before the Divine Presence as joy culminates in voiceless marvel. There is a time to be vocal and a time to be silent.

Thought of the Week

By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

THE ELUSIVENESS OF SPIRITUALITY
(Nu. 11:25): The 70 Elders attained a high level of spirituality through emanation (*atzilut*) from their Master, Moses. "(God) caused the spirit imparted on Moses to emanate and be bestowed upon the 70 Elders. When the spirit descended on them, they gained the gift of prophecy." Now, did they keep it with them or eventually lose it?

Torah uses an ambiguous phrase, "*velo-yasafu*" -- which may either mean that they did not continue to maintain their spiritual attainment (Rashi, Sifre), or that they never stopped maintaining it (Targum). The ambiguity of Torah's style points to the elusiveness of spiritual attainment; how difficult to maintain, how unsure to ascertain.

Thought of the Week

Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

BEHAALOTEKHA

May 31, 1991

THE ELUSIVENESS OF SPIRITUALITY: The seventy Elders attained a high level of spirituality through emanation (*atzilut*) from their Master, Moses (Nu. 11:25): "[God] caused the spirit imparted on Moses to emanate, and be bestowed upon the seventy elders. When the spirit descended on them, they gained the gift of prophecy." Now, did these elders keep their fortuitous gift of prophecy with them or did they eventually lose it?

Indicatively Torah uses an ambiguous phrase ("*velo-yasafu*"), which may either mean that they did not **continue** to maintain their spiritual attainment (*Rashi, Sifre*), or that they never **stopped** maintaining it (*Targum*). The ambiguity of Torah's style points to the elusiveness of spiritual attainment: How difficult it is to maintain it, how uncertain to ascertain it. A lesson in humility and self-awareness: Never be complacent and never boast of your alleged spiritual attainments. You can never be sure whether you truly ever had them; or, if you did, whether you still have them or already lost them.