

Portion Behaalothekha Bamidbar - Numbers (8.0-12.16)

After the Dwelling Place for The Ten Commandments and The Appointed Meeting Place for God is made holy, God commands Moses to have Aaron light the seven branched menorah. God commands the Levites to be purified so they could be God's special helpers. On the first holy day for The Dwelling Place of The Ten Commandments a cloud appears. The cloud looks like fire in the evenings. Only when the cloud moves do the Israelites travel and move The Dwelling Place. When the cloud settles, they make camp. The Israelites follow this cloud out of the wilderness. Every time the Ark moves, Moses shouts, "God, scatter Your enemies and let those who hate You flee." When setting the Ark down Moses says, "Stay in peace O' God, among Your family of Israel."

"Moses," God then says, "make two silver trumpets for the priests. Blow both trumpets to call everyone to My Tent. Blow one trumpet to have only the leaders come. Blow to show directions. Blow during war so that I, God, will save you. Blow the trumpet for Me when you win, during festivals and on the first day each month."

While traveling some Hebrews began to complain so God started a fire to kill them. Later, the Israelites cried, "We miss the meat and fish and fruits and vegetables that we ate in Egypt." Moses turns to God, "Why have You made me their leader. It is too much of a burden for me." God answers, "Moses, have 70 of the elders help you listen to these complaints. Now tell the complainers I will send meat and they will eat it until it makes them sick. Tell them that I made them sick because they rejected Me by crying that life was better in Egypt." And so the quail came and those who ate greedily died.

Now Moses was the most humble man on earth. He decided to marry a dark-skinned woman. This made Miriam and Aaron angry and they questioned Moses. "Maybe God doesn't only speak to you but to us too."

But God spoke up from a cloud in front of the Tent of Appointed Meeting, "Moses is My prophet. Why were you not afraid to speak against him?" With that, God left the Tent angrily and when the cloud disappeared, Miriam had leprosy. Aaron cried out, "Oh God, please forgive our sins." And Moses cried, "O God, please heal her." God answered, "Miriam must live outside the camp as a leper for 7 days before she can return home." And the people waited for Miriam to return healthy before they moved camp again.

Questions: 1. Like God sending the cloud to guide the Israelites, do you ever feel guided by "a cloud" from God when you are in a physical or spiritual wilderness? How? 2) Do you think God still gets angry when people complain about life? How? 3) Why does God punish Miriam with leprosy and do nothing to Aaron?

Illustration ideas: The cloud of God leading the Israelites... Moses praying when the Ark is moved...The Israelites moving and camping....The silver trumpets blowing....Moses and his 'dark-skinned' wife...Miriam and Aaron questioning Moses....Miriam getting leprosy and living outside the camp.