



Sermon Spark

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Sermon Sparks: Behaalotcha Israel faces many threats. External threats often bring us together. Internal threats, however, can rip us apart. At times when internal conflict rages, our natural inclination is to distance ourselves. However, those are actually the times to draw closest.

Framing

Behaalotcha is a parasha that details many troubles that face the Jewish people on their way to the land of Israel. They include:

- Eldad and Madad, renegade prophets, challenging Moshe's authority (Numbers: 11:26).
- The children of Israel murmuring against God and Moses, complaining about a lack of meat. (Numbers 11:20)
- Miriam and Aaron speaking *lashon hara*, gossip, against Moses (Numbers 12:1)

These conflicts present a moment of great crisis and threat for Moses. They have been through many crises before: Pharaoh's army, enemy kings, the harsh desert. However, these threats have all been **external**. The threats in this parasha are different. The insubordination, complaint, conflict, and betrayal that occur in this parasha are all **internal**.

Key Text

In the middle of these internal struggles, we find the following verse in the Torah: "Moses then re-entered the camp, he and the elders of Israel" (Numbers 11:29).

Rav Simcha Bunim in his commentary, Likkutim Hadashim, parashat Behaalotcha, says:

"This comes to teach us that in a time of distress, Moshe did not flee. Rather, he stayed inside the camp of Israel, to hear the distress, and did not separate from them."

Modern Application to Israel

It's easy to rally when threats to Israel are external. But what about when the threats are internal? Jews fighting other Jews? J-Street vs. AIPAC? Hareidim vs. Seculars? Perhaps those are the times when we must follow Moshe's leadership and fully engage ourselves in the fate of the nation, rather than pulling away.

- **Israel Conversion Bill A Hard Sell To U.S. Jews**

http://www.thejewishweek.com/news/new_york/israel_conversion_bill_hard_sell_us_jews

- **Anger Over Arrest at Kotel Of Woman Carrying Torah**

<http://www.forward.com/articles/129362/>