



*Prophecy in the
camp...*

Rabbi Alon Meltzer

*A New Page of Talmud –
Behalotcha 5782*



Two of the participants, one named Eldad and the other Medad, had remained in camp; yet the spirit rested upon them—they were among those recorded, but they had not gone out to the Tent—and they spoke in ecstasy in the camp. An assistant* ran out and told Moses, saying, “Eldad and Medad are acting the prophet in the camp!” ... But Moses said to him, “Are you wrought up on my account? Would that all God’s people were prophets, that God put [the divine] spirit upon them!” – **Bamidbar 11:26-29**¹ although these men had not been chosen to become part of the seventy elders, seeing that they were fit to have been elders and they did not feel humbled or rejected by not being chosen, they were rewarded

by being given greater and longer lasting prophetic insights that the seventy whose parchment had read: “elder.” – **Rashi on Bamidbar 11:26**² "They (Eldad and Medad) remained in the camp, for when they saw Moses selecting elders, they said:

We are not deserving of this honor, saying which, they went and hid themselves — whereupon the L-rd said to them: You lowered yourselves; I will exalt you above all the others – **Sifrei Bamidbar 11:26**³ Moses did not care if they would prophesy in the camp or only in the sacred precincts around the Tabernacle, as long as they would make his task easier to accomplish. – **Chizkuni on Bamidbar 11:29**⁴ “My lord Moses, lock them up!” The reason Joshua said this was because Eldad and Meidad had prophesied that Moses would die (in the desert). Joshua would lead the people into the land of Canaan. Nachmanides feels that the reason Joshua wanted these men locked up was because they had refused Moses’ instructions to present themselves at the Tabernacle together with the other seventy men. They had failed to obey an order. He considered it possible that what they prophesied was a lie and that they were irrational, and had to be put under guard. Moses, in a typical display of humility, said that he wished that G’d

would bestow prophetic spirit on the entire nation directly not merely using him as an intermediary. – **Rabeinu Bachya**⁵ and it is revealed before the Holy One, Blessed be He, that the Jewish people would believe. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses: They are believers, the children of believers; and ultimately, you will not believe.– **Babylonian Tractate, Sanhedrin 97a**⁶ As long as in the heart, within, The soul of a Jew still yearns, And onward, towards the ends of the east, an eye still gazes toward Zion; Our hope is not yet lost, The hope of two thousand years, ☞ To be a free nation in our land, The land of Zion and Jerusalem. – **Hatikvah**⁷ At the heart of Judaism

...“Eldad and Medad are acting the prophet in the camp!”

אֵלְדָד וּמֵידָד מְתַנְבְּאִים בְּמַחֲנֶה
Bamidbar 11:27

is a belief so fundamental to Western civilization that we take it for granted, yet it is anything but self-evident. It has been challenged many times, rarely more so than today. It is the belief in human freedom.

We are what we choose to be. Society is what we choose to make it. The future is open. There is nothing inevitable in the affairs of humankind. – **Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**⁸

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