**פרשת בהעלתך / Parashat Beha'alotkha**

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 **Do You Understand the Significance**

**of the Lord’s Table?**

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| **השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week’s Reading** |
| **תורה:****הפטרה:****הברית:****החדשה:** | Numbers 8:1-12:16 Zechariah 2:14-4:71 Cor. 10:6-13 Rev. 11:1-19 |

 This week I would like to discuss two topics, one which is directly related to Parashat beha’alotkha and another topic that is indirectly related and the title of this parsha, the Lord’s Table. You may be thinking this topic is a little out of place, but I believe we can gain new insight into the Lord’s Table by taking a closer look at *Bamidbar 8:1-9:14* (*Numbers 8:1-9:14*). To gain this insight I would like to look at First however, I want to look at this parsha and offer a different interpretation of what has been debated in traditional Judaism. Rashi quotes from a famous Midrash that explains the juxtaposition between the first topic in Beha’alotkha which is the mitzvah to light the Menorah.

**Numbers 8:1-4**

8:1 ADONAI said to Moshe, 8:2 "Tell Aharon, 'When you set up the lamps, the seven lamps are to cast their light forward, in front of the menorah.'" 8:3 Aharon did this: he lit its lamps so as to give light in front of the menorah, as ADONAI had ordered Moshe. 8:4 Here is how the menorah was made: it was hammered gold from its base to its flowers, hammered work, following the pattern ADONAI had shown Moshe. This is how he made the menorah. (CJB)



 The Midrash discusses why the lighting of the menorah at the beginning of this week’s parsha is juxtaposed to last week’s parsha Naso referring to the twelve day dedication ceremony of the Mizbach (altar, מזבח).

*“Why is the parsha of the Menorah juxtaposed to “chanukat han’si’im (הנשיאם / leaders)?”(reference Bamidbar / Numbers 7:10) When Aharon saw the daily dedication offering by the ‘n’si’im’ he became depressed, because neigher he, nor his shevet took part in this ceremony. God reassured Aharon saying: Do not worry, your portion is greater than theirs, for you are a light and attend to the Menorah every morning and evening.”*

 The problem I mentioned before is the disagreement that Ramban (*Nahmanides (1194–c. 1270), Rabbi Moshe ben Nahman*) is found arguing is Aharon really “left out?” Ramban immediately questions the assumption of this Midrash saying “could it be that Aharon is depressed because he felt left out? Aharon in fact was the center of attention during the twelve days of dedication; didn’t Aharon offer all of the Korbanot (sacrifices) on each of those days? In Ramban’s commentary, he is unable to find a satisfactory explanation of this Midrash. In fact, Ramban ended upon explaining the Midrash that the Menorah lighting is simply to provide a biblical source for the Hasmonean Revolt (or Maccabee Revolt).

The Maccabees (מכבים or מקבים, Makabim) were a Jewish national liberation movement that fought for and won independence from Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the Hellenistic Seleucid dynasty, who was succeeded by his infant son Antiochus V Eupator. The Maccabees founded the Hasmonean royal dynasty and established Jewish independence in the Land of Yisrael for about one hundred years, from 164 BCE to 63 BCE.

 I want to suggest another reason the lighting of the menorah was placed where it is in parsha Beha’alotkha. In *Bamidbar 8:1-9:14*, we can outline a number of sections: (i) Lighting of the Menorah (*8:1-4*), (ii) Taking the Levites and sanctifying them (*8:5-26*), (iii) A command for Pesach (Passover) and what to do if one is unclean due to a dead body (*9:1-7*), (iv) Moshe acting as an intercessor on behalf of those men who were unclean (*9:8-12*). Let’s next discuss each of these topics in a little more detail.

**Lighting of the Menorah**

 The menorah is a seven branched candelabrum which is lit by olive oil in the Mishkhan (Tabernacle) and later in the temple built in Jerusalem. It is one of the oldest symbols of the Jewish people and it is said to symbolize the burning bush (see *Shmot / Exodus 25*). The construction of the menorah followed a strict pattern and is listed in *Shmot / Exodus 25:31-40*. The seven candles in the first temple menorah symbolized the seven days of creation. The burning of the menorah in the temple was to be a continuous burning so the light would shine forth continually nonstop. Interestingly Yeshua used the light analogy about himself, see the following verses.

***John 8:12***

*8:12 Yeshua spoke to them again: "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light which gives life." (CJB)*

***John 9:5***

*9:5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (CJB)*

 In the B’rit HaChadashah (NT), sefer Ivrit (book of Hebrews) Yeshua is described as the Shekhina glory of G-d, so Yeshua’s use of the imagery of light as the Messiah is very significant, it draws us a picture of the menorah in the Temple.

**Levites and their sanctification**

 In the section of verses (*8:5-26*) relating to the sanctifying of the Levites I would like to look at the Hebrew text what I consider significant.



Take the Levites from the midst of the children of Yisrael and you cleanse them.



The repeated word “Tzava” and its usage here to describe the Levites role of service in the Ohel Moed (Tent of Meeting).

Repeated word for emphasis; suggesting the significance of being tenufa/sanctified unto the Lord.

The laying of hands upon the Levites; the laying on of hands upon the heads of the bulls.



 There are a few key points I wanted to highlight while reading here which you can see I have written a short description of the important verses I want to look at. The first is Hashem telling Moshe to take the Levites and to make them clean for service in the Ohel Moed (Tent of Meeting). I believe this section of verses typifies us as believers in Yeshua the Messiah. G-d has called us to be separated from this world and holy before him. *Bamidbar / Numbers 8:10* says “you will cause the Levites to draw near before HaShem, and the children of Yisrael will lay their hands upon the Levites.” The laying on of hands suggests the approval of the children of Yisrael in the commissioning and sanctification of the Levites. I believe this gives us a picture of the body of believers acting as a community participating in and supporting each other in our faith. *Bamidbar / Numbers 8:16-17* there is a repeated word נתונים נתונים this is a plural form of the word “given” נתון which means to be given whole heartedly. The Levites were to give themselves whole heartedly to the service the Lord had them to do in the Ohel Meod (Tent of Meeting). This is attested too in *Bamidbar / Numbers 8:24* when with the use of the word צבא which means “army, military, armed forces, troops; host.” The words לצבא צבא בעבדת אהל מועד gives us a picture of the work in the Ohel Meod as befitting or characteristic of a soldier in the military. So what does all of this mean? As believers in Yeshua, our lives have to change, we have to give ourselves whole heartedly to HaShem as priests of G-d in the same manner in which one would give their lives for their country.

**Command to participate in Pesach**

 The command to participate in Pesach (Passover) is so important that if one is found to be unclean from touching a dead body, one is still commanded to participate in Pesach.



Command to obey Pesach. Some men who became unclean for the flesh of man and were not able to do Pesach; then they ask why they should be kept from bringing the korban to Hashem.

 In this section of verses we find the command to observe Pesach and what would happen if one were to become unclean by touching a dead body. *Bamidbar / Numbers 9:8* we find Moshe going before Hashem to seek an answer from the Lord.

**Moshe as an Intercessor**

 *Bamidbar / Numbers 9:8* Moshe tells the men to stand still while he asks what the command of the Lord for them is.

Moshe seeks and answer for the men of Yisrael who are unclean. Moshe receives and answer on what the command of the Lord is concerning being unclean and Pesach.



 Here we see Moshe interceding on behalf of the men who are asking if they can still bring the Pesach Korban. There are many instances in the Torah where we find Moshe and the priests are interceding on behalf of the people, this typifies the role of a priest.

**Discussion**

 I believe we have found a wonderful Midrash in Parashat Beha’alotkha. I mentioned earlier that I would suggest another reason G-d lead Moshe to organize this week’s Parsha in the way he did. Let’s look at the outline again: (i) Lighting of the Menorah (*8:1-4*), (ii) Taking the Levites and sanctifying them (*8:5-26*), (iii) A command for Pesach (Passover) and what to do if one is unclean due to a dead body (*9:1-7*), (iv) Moshe acting as an intercessor on behalf of those men who were unclean (*9:8-12*). I believe this section of verses is an image of our life as believers. God provided to us his Messiah Yeshua who is the Shekhina glory of G-d, the light of the world, and symbolically represented by the menorah that burns continuously in the Mishkhan (Tabernacle). By faith in Yeshua, we are made to be priests, separated from the world. The calling that we have is so great, that we need to offer ourselves, our lives whole heartedly, without reservation unto the Lord. Our faith in the Lord needs to be uncompromising, and a parallel is drawn along side of the characteristic of a soldier who is in service to defending a nation. In the command to observe the Pesach Seder, even if one has become unclean due to a dead body, this symbolizes our need to draw near to the Lord by faith in His Messiah Yeshua no matter what condition we are presently in. Do not wait for a time what some would call that perfect time to accept Yeshua into your heart. And finally, Moshe is an image of the Messiah Yeshua in the action of his role as intercessor. Something to note in the Torah, Moshe operates as prophet, priest and king unto the nation of Yisrael. So too Yeshua operates as prophet, priest and king in his role as Messiah and Savior.

**Conclusion**

 You may be wondering now how the title of the parsha about the Lord’s Table and what we have just studied is related? To begin I would like to ask you a question: “When you hear the words ‘The Lord’s Table’ what comes to mind?” Does a table at the front of your church holding grape juice in small plastic glasses and unleavened wafers come to mind? The Lord’s Table as you know is a reference to communion, and the apostle Shaul (Paul) mentioned this in *1 Corinthians* when he was discussing about eating meat and drink that was first offered to an idol.

The Lord’s Table

**1 Corinthians 10:21**

לא תוּכְלוּ לִשְׁתּוֹת מִכּוֹס הָאָדוֹן וּמִכּוֹס הַשֵּׁדִים לא תוּכְלוּ לְהִתְחַבֵּר לְשֻׁלְחָן הָאָדוֹן וּלְשֻׁלְחָן הַשֵּׁדִים׃

(HNT)

 One of the most important reasons for studying the scriptures in the original languages, and from a cultural and historical perspective is for the purpose of getting out of this the full meaning of who we are as believers in Yeshua. When Shaul (Paul) mentioned The Lord’s Table, the imagery that immediately came to mind was that of the table of the bread of the presence that was placed upon the table in the Mishkhan (Tabernacle) and later on in the Temple in Jerusalem. *Bamidbar / Numbers 4:7 On the table of showbread they are to spread a blue cloth and place on it the dishes, incense pans, offering bowls and pitchers. The perpetual bread is to remain on the table. (CJB)* When Yeshua said this is my body, the bread, the imagery was that of what is found in the Temple service. What is most significant is we are now eating the bread of the presence, do you know what this means? The bread of the presence was only to be eaten by the priests in the Temple. This means we are now made to be priests by faith in Yeshua the Messiah. Now go and read *1 Corinthians 10:15-24*, do you see the significance of what it means to drink a cup and eat bread that was from the table of devils versus the Table of the Lord? We certainly cannot be both a priest of devils and a priest of G-d.

 In the imagery of the Lord’s Table, we find Pesach (Passover), the Korban (sacrifice, drawing near), blood, bread of the presence meaning we are priests, holiness, sanctification, the transferring of sins to the korban, the importance of our role as priests today that should be typified in the work of a soldier laying down his life for his country. The Lord’s Table is not just simply a table at the front of the church that contains some unleavened wafers and little plastic cups of grape juice. Communion, the Lord’s Table is rich with meaning and significance for our lives today. So, do you understand the significance of The Lord’s Table?

**Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!**

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**הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:**

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,

“Yeshua” King Messiah forever and ever