

# פרשת בהעלתך / Parashat Beha'alotkha

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## Do You Understand the Significance of the Lord's Table?

### השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Numbers 8:1-12:16  
הפטרה: Zechariah 2:14-4:7  
הברית: 1 Cor. 10:6-13 Rev. 11:1-19  
החדשה

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This week I want to discuss two topics, one is directly related to Parashat Beha'alotkha and the other topic is indirectly related and happens to be the title of the parsha about 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)*. Let's start by first looking at what traditional Judaism has said concerning this portion of scriptures and then look at the scriptures; perhaps we can offer a different interpretation.

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Rashi quotes from a famous Midrash that attempts to explain the juxtaposition between the first subject in Beha'alotkha, the mitzvah to light the Menorah:

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וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו ח  
בְּהֵעֲלִיתָךְ אֶת־הַנְּרֹת אֶל־מִוֶּלֶךְ פְּנֵי הַמְּנוֹרָה יָאִירוּ שִׁבְעַת  
הַנְּרֹת: וַיַּעַשׂ בֶּן־אַהֲרֹן אֶל־מִוֶּלֶךְ פְּנֵי הַמְּנוֹרָה הַעֲלָה נִרְתִּימָה  
כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה: וְזֶה מַעֲשֵׂה הַמְּנֹרָה מִקְשֵׁה זָהָב  
עֲדִי־יָרְכֶה עֲדִי־פְרָחֶה מִקְשֵׁה הוּא כַּמְרָאָה אֲשֶׁר הִרְאָה יְהוָה  
אֶת־מֹשֶׁה בֶּן־עֵשָׂה אֶת־הַמְּנֹרָה:  
וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: קַח אֶת־הַקְּלוֹיִם מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל וְסַהֲרֵת אֹתָם: וְכִהֵ־תַעֲשֶׂה לָהֶם לְמַתְהַרֵם הַזֶּה עֲלֵיהֶם 7

#### Numbers 8:1-4

8:1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 8:2 'Speak to Aaron and say to him, 'When you mount the lamps, the seven lamps will give light in the front of the lampstand.' 8:3 Aaron therefore did so; he mounted its lamps at the front of the lampstand, just as the Lord had commanded Moses. 8:4 Now this was the workmanship of the lampstand, hammered work of gold; from its base to its flowers it was hammered work; according to the pattern which the Lord had showed Moses, so he made the lampstand. (NASB)

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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, מַזְבֵּחַ).

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*"Why is the parsha of the Menorah juxtaposed to "chanukat han'si'im (הנשיאים / leaders)?" (reference Bamidbar / Numbers 7:10) When Aharon saw the daily dedication offering by the 'n'si'im' he became depressed, because neither 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 to light and attend to the Menorah every morning and evening."*

35 Interestingly (but not unusual) Ramban (*Nahmanides (1194–c. 1270), Rabbi Moshe ben Nahman*) disagrees with Rashi arguing whether Aharon really feels “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 40 commentary, he is unable to find a satisfactory explanation of this Midrash. In fact, Ramban ended by explaining the Midrash saying the Menorah lighting is simply to provide a biblical source for the Hasmonean Revolt (or Maccabee Revolt). (see side note)

45 Here is where I want to suggest another explanation why the lighting of the menorah was placed where it is in parsha Beha’alotkha. To see this, we need to outline *Bamidbar 8:1-9:14*, in the following way: (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*), 50 (iv) Moshe acting as an intercessor on behalf of those men who were unclean (*9:8-12*). Taking this outline, let’s look at little closer at each topic:

### Lighting of the Menorah

55 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 60 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.

#### 65 **John 8:12**

*8:12 Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.’ (NASB)*

#### 70 **John 9:5**

*9:5 ‘While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.’ (NASB)*

75 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

80 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.

The Maccabees (מַכַּבִּיִּים or מַכְבִּיִּים, 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.

וידבר יהוה אל־משה לאמר: קח את־הלויים מתוך בני ישראל וטהרת אתם: וכדתעשה להם לטהרם הוה עליהם

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

מי חטאת והעבירו תער על־כל־בשרם וכבסו בגדיהם והטהרו: ולקחו פר בן־בקר ומנחתו סלת כלולה בשמן ופר־שני בן־בקר תקח לחטאת: והקרבת את־הלויים לפני

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

אהל מועד והקדלת את־כל־עדת בני ישראל: והקרבת את־הלויים לפני יהוה וסמכו בני־ישראל את־ידיהם על־הלויים: והניד אהרן את־הלויים תנופה לפני יהוה מאת בני ישראל והיו לעבד את־עבדת יהוה: והלויים יסמכו את־ידיהם על ראש הפרים ועשה את־האחד חטאת ואת־האחר עלה ליהוה לכפר על־הלויים: והעמדת את־הלויים לפני אהרן ולפני בני

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

והנפת אתם תנופה ליהוה: והבדלת את־הלויים מתוך בני ישראל והיו לי הלויים: ואחריו־כן יבאו הלויים לעבד את־אהל

מועד וטהרת אתם והנפת אתם תנופה: כי נתנים נתנים המה לי מתוך בני ישראל תחת פטרת כל־רחם בכור כל מבני ישראל לקחתי אתם לי: כי לי כל־בכור בבני ישראל באדם ובבהמה ביום הבתי כל־בכור בארץ מצרים הקדשתי אתם לי: ואקח את־הלויים תחת כל־בכור בבני ישראל:

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

ואתנה את־הלויים נתנים לאהרן ולבניו מתוך בני ישראל לעבד את־עבדת בני־ישראל באהל מועד ולכפר על־בני ישראל ולא יהוה בבני ישראל נגף בגשת בני־ישראל אל־הקדש: ויעש משה ואהרן וכל־עדת בני־ישראל ללויים ככל אשר־צוה יהוה את־משה ללויים בן־עשו להם בני ישראל: ויתחטאו הלויים וכבסו בגדיהם וניף אהרן אתם תנופה לפני יהוה ויכפר עליהם אהרן לטהרם: ואחריו־כן באו הלויים לעבד את־עבדתם באהל מועד לפני אהרן ולפני בניו כאשר צוה יהוה את־משה על־הלויים בן עשו להם:

וידבר יהוה אל־משה לאמר: זאת אשר ללויים מן

חמש ועשרים שנה ומעלה יבוא לעבא עבא בעבדת אהל מועד: ומבן חמשים שנה ישוב מעבא העבדה ולא יעבד עוד: ושרת את־אחיו באהל מועד לשמר משמרת ועבדה לא יעבד ככה תעשה ללויים במשמרתם:

There are a few key points I wanted to highlight while reading through these verses. As you can see I made short notes next to each important verse I want to look at. In 8:5-26 Hashem is 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 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 the faith. *Bamidbar / Numbers 8:16-17* there is a repeated word נתונים נתונים this is a plural form of the word “given” נתון. Repeating this word places extra emphasis upon the word and thus 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* by the use of the word צבא which typically means “army, military, armed forces, troops; host.” The phrase 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. Likewise, 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 in its national defense.

110 **Command to participate in Pesach**

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

90 וידבר יהוה אל־משה במדבר־סיני בשנה השנית לצאתם  
 95 מארץ מצרים בחדש הראשון לאמר: ויעשו בני־ישראל  
 את־הפסח במועדו: בארבעה־עשר־יום בחדש הזה בין  
 הערבים תעשו אתו במועדו בכל־חקתיו וככל־משפטו תעשו  
 100 אתו: וידבר משה אל־בני ישראל לעשת הפסח: ויעשו  
 את־הפסח בראשון בארבעה־עשר יום לחדש בין הערבים  
 במדבר סיני ככל אשר צוה יהוה את־משה כן עשו בני  
 105 ישראל: ויהיו אנשים אשר היו טמאים לגפש אדם ולא־יכלו  
 לעשת־הפסח ביום ההוא ויקרבו לפני משה ולפני אהרן ביום  
 ההוא: ויאמרו האנשים ההמה אליו אנחנו טמאים לגפש אדם  
 למה נגרע לבלתי הקריב את־קרבן יהוה במועדו בתוך בני  
 110 ישראל: ויאמר אלהם משה עמדו ואשמעה מה־יצוה יהוה

Command to obey Pesach. Problem occurred, some men who became unclean for the flesh of man wondered if they were not able to do Pesach; so they ask why they should be kept from bringing the korban to Hashem.

In this section of verses we are told to observe Pesach. Then a question is asked why one should be kept from bringing the korban of the Pesach if they are



made unclean by the flesh of man which is typically interpreted as touching a  
120 dead body. Moshe then seeks an answer from the Lord in *Bamidbar / Numbers*  
*9:8*.

### Moshe as an Intercessor

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

יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מֹשֶׁה עֲמֹדוּ וְאַשְׁמְעָה מֵהַיְצוּנָה יְהוָה  
לָכֶם:  
וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר  
אִישׁ אִישׁ כִּי־יִהְיֶה טָמֵא לְנֶפֶשׁ אוֹ בְדַרְדָּר רְחֹקָה לָכֶם  
אוֹ לְדַרְתֵיכֶם וַעֲשֵׂה פֶסַח לַיהוָה: בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי בְּאַרְבַּעָה  
עָשָׂר יוֹם בֵּין הָעֲרֵבִים יַעֲשׂוּ אֹתוֹ עַל־מִצּוֹת וּמִרְרִים וְיֹאכְלוּ:  
לֹא־יִשְׂאֲרוּ מִמֶּנּוּ עַד־בֹּקֶר וְעַצֵּם לֹא יִשְׁבְּרוּ־בּוֹ כְּכִלְיַחֲקַת  
הַפֶּסַח יַעֲשׂוּ אֹתוֹ: וְהָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־הוּא טָהוֹר וּבְדַרְדָּר לֹא־יִהְיֶה  
וְחָדַל לַעֲשׂוֹת הַפֶּסַח וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהִוא מֵעַמּוּת כִּי קָרַבַּן  
יְהוָה לֹא הִקְרִיב בְּמַעַדוֹ חֲטָאוֹ יִשָּׂא הָאִישׁ הַהוּא: וְכִי־יִגִּיד  
אֶתְכֶם גֵּר וַעֲשֵׂה פֶסַח לַיהוָה כְּחֻקַּת הַפֶּסַח וְכַמִּשְׁפָּטֵי בֶן יַעֲשֵׂה

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.

130 Here we see Moshe interceding (mediate, intermediate) on behalf of the men  
who are asking if they can still bring the Pesach Korban. This intermediary  
technique is found in many places in the Torah; Moshe and the priests are  
interceding on behalf of the people. This again characterizes the role of a priest as  
being a representative on our behalf before G-d.

### 135 Discussion

This parsha has turned out to be a neat little Midrash on verses *8:1-9:14*. I  
mentioned earlier that I would suggest another reason G-d lead Moshe to organize  
140 this Parsha in the way he did; I believe there is a more intuitive interpretation that  
actually fits pretty well. 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  
145 were unclean (*9:8-12*). I believe this section of verses is an image of our life as  
the children of G-d by faith in Yeshua the Messiah. 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  
150 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



of devils versus the Table of the Lord? Shaul is trying to say we who are priests  
by faith in Yeshua certainly cannot be both a priest of devils and a priest of G-d.  
200 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  
205 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 looking back at the title of this week's parsha, ask  
yourself, do I understand the significance of The Lord's Table within its original  
context, culturally, historically, and biblically?  
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**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

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