

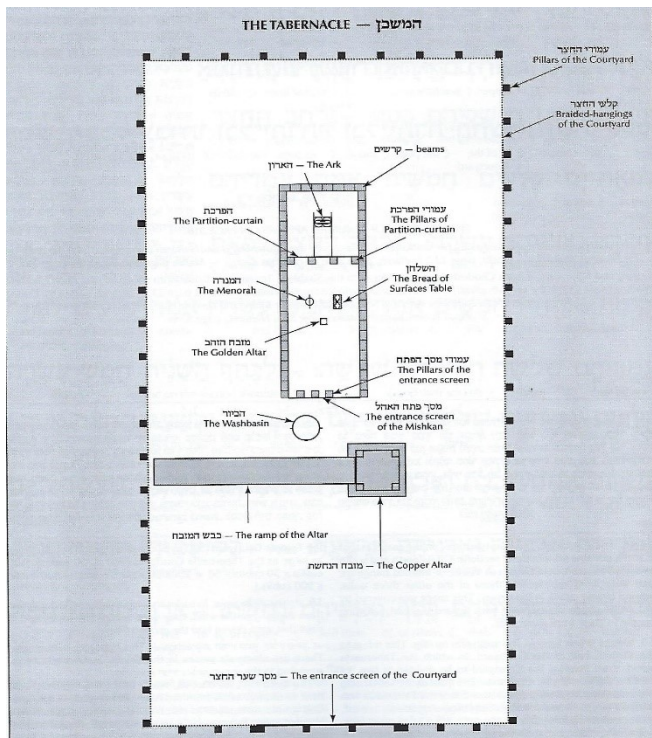
PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	RENEWED
Beha'alotcha	2 June 2018	19 Sivan 5778	Num. 8:1-12:16	Zech. 2:10-4:7	Matt. 14:14-21

## Numbers 8:1-12:15

Last week's Torah portion ended with 12 princes bringing their inaugural offerings for the dedication of the Tabernacle. This week's portion starts with Hashem speaking to Moshe, "Speak to Aharon, and say to him, When you light the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the menorah. And Aharon did so; he lit the lamps in front of the menorah, as Hashem commanded Moshe. And this work of the Menorah was of beaten gold, to the shaft of it, to its blossoms it was beating work: according to the pattern that Hashem had shown Moshe, so he made the menorah."<sup>1</sup>

For 12 days, each prince brought offerings from their respective tribes, but the tribe of Lewi was not part of the dedication. While the princes were making their offerings, Aharon hoped that his turn to make the offering will come. When that did not happen, he was disappointed. Thus, Hashem spoke to Moshe to "speak to Aharon and say to him."

Hashem reminded Aharon<sup>2</sup> that (a) he had inaugurated the Menorah by kindling its lamp for 12 days; (b) he kindled the lamp himself; (c) his kindling framed each day's sacrificial rites, while their (12 princes) offerings were just one part of each day's events; (d) his kindling took place in the inner chamber while their (12 princes) offerings were sacrificed on the Outer Altar. Therefore, he should not be disappointed.



"Kindling its lamp" also has a spiritual meaning. We studied that a human has three components of the soul: *nefesh* (life), *ruach* (spirit), and *neshamah* (soul). "*Ner Hashem nishmas adam.*"<sup>3</sup> Literal translation: "candle / Hashem / soul / man." Therefore, we can articulate that "kindling" is a *mitzvah* (deed) on "its lamp" (commandments) and stay near the flame (soul) until it becomes a steady and self-reliant glow. We cannot have true spiritual light of reward in this physical world; instead it awaits him in the next world above.<sup>4</sup> When we show others the true path to keeping the *mizvos* in order to elevate them. Tell them to shine the light of their souls toward the Supernal Menorah above, which is the light of the Infinite *Ein Sof*.<sup>5</sup>

In Exodus 27:20, Hashem command the children of Yisrael to bring "pure olive oil...to cause the lamp to burn always." We also find similar verse in Leviticus 24:4, "He shall arrange the lamps upon the menorah

<sup>1</sup> Numbers 8:2-4

<sup>2</sup> Likutei Sichot, vol. 18, pp. 92-98

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 20:27

<sup>4</sup> MiPeninei Noam Elimelech, The Torch and the Flame, p. 222

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 223

before Hashem continually.” Therefore, when Aharon lights the menorah, the lamp must contain pure olive oil.

Now, does Hashem need the lamps of men? In Daniel 2:22 says, “He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him.” Also, in Psalms 139:12 says, “Yes, the darkness hides not from You; but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to you.” These two verses alone are stating that Hashem does not need the light of men. When King Solomon built the Temple, he had narrow windows inside and made the window wider on the exterior.<sup>6</sup> So that the light might go forth from the Temple and shine outside.

Thus, the question is not that Hashem need the light, rather the light is enabling us to acquire merit so we can get closer to Him. Meaning, we are to kindle (mitzvah) the light (commandment) before Hashem and He will give a greater light to shine upon us. King Solomon says, “For the mitzvah is a lamp; and the Torah is light.”<sup>7</sup>

Continuing with the account of the first day Nisan, 2449 AC, the Torah is now describing how the Levites were installed to their respective positions.<sup>8</sup> Rashi says that the purifying water was the water made from the ashes of the red cow in case they might be defiled by contact with the dead. The sacrifice of the red heifer is described in Numbers Chapter 19. Rashi continues that since the Levites are substituting for the firstborn who had committed idolatry and since idolatry is called in Psalm 106:28, “sacrifices offered to the dead.” Since a leper is also referred to “as one dead”<sup>9</sup>, he is required to shave off all of their body hair as a leper must when he is cleansed.<sup>10</sup> The removal of body hair (v. 7) differs here with Joseph when he was brought before Pharaoh (Gen. 41:14). As for Joseph, he was to look presentable in the presence of a king. Whereas here, in this verse, it is to remove all impurity<sup>11</sup> from the person’s body.

From the beginning of chapter 5, the narrative has been focused on the events on the first day of Nisan. Verse 1 of chapter 9 records “the first month of the second year” which implies that the events occurred on Nisan were recorded after the month of Iyar.

The Talmud explains in Succah three situations where the Israelites could not perform Pesach: 1. They were cousins who carried out the bodies of Abihu and Nadav; 2. They were coffin bearers of Joseph; 3. They were who buried people during the course of a year in the desert.

Hashem command the Israelites to “keep the Pesach at its appointed time”<sup>12</sup> which means they are to sacrifice a Passover lamb on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. And they kept the Pesach.<sup>13</sup> However, there were some people who could not keep Pesach as they were defiled carrying the remains of their forefathers from Egypt.

On *pashat* (literal) sense, it is straight forward. Since they came in contact with a dead body, they were unclean. Thus they required seven days to purify themselves before Pesach.<sup>14</sup> They did not do so. Because

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<sup>6</sup> First Kings 6:4

<sup>7</sup> Proverbs 6:23

<sup>8</sup> Numbers 8:5

<sup>9</sup> Numbers 12:12

<sup>10</sup> The Commentators’ Bible, Numbers, p. 57

<sup>11</sup> Bekhor Shor

<sup>12</sup> Numbers 9:2,3

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, v. 5

<sup>14</sup> Numbers 19:11-13

when the Israelites were preparing to leave Egypt, Hashem commanded them to slaughter a lamb. It was not eaten as a sacrifice. They simply slaughtered a lamb, applied the blood on the door post, and ate the meat. Their underlying challenge to Moshe was why should it be different from the first Pesach they observed in Egypt?

When we read verses 5 and 6, we learn that the Pesach was observed. In verse 6, we saw some men came to Moshe after the Pesach. These are the coffin bearers who were unclean and could not observe Pesach because of their impurity. So, instead of saying, "I have sinned," they are blaming Moshe for their "sins" of not being purified before the Pesach.

Moshe replied, "Last year, the Pesach lamb was not slaughtered as a sacrifice. But Hashem said that this year (2449) it is to be treated as a sacrifice. As you know (implying that the *torah* (instructions) were given prior to them challenging Moshe), that only ritually pure people may offer sacrifices." After some more objections, they finally conceded and asked for second Pesach they could observe.

So, the question is not whether we are ritually pure or impure. Hashem already knew these people will come forth and challenge Moshe. Hashem was waiting for these people to come and ask Him for a second chance. Moshe wrote these verses not to discredit them but to merit their actions for asking a second chance. This is the teaching of Pesach Shenini. Shouldn't we ask Hashem for a second chance?