

PARASHAH: B'ha'alotkha (When you set up)
ADDRESS: B'midbar (Numbers) 8:1-12:16
READING DATE: Shabbat
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(Note: all quotations are taken from the Complete Jewish Bible, translation by David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., unless otherwise noted)

Let's begin with the opening blessing for the Torah:

***“Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-‘Olam,
asher bachar banu m’kol ha-amim,
v’natan lanu eht Torah-to.
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.
Ameyn.”***

(Blessed are you, O' LORD, our God, King of the Universe,
you have selected us from among all the peoples,
and have given us your Torah.
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.
Ameyn.)

A short mitzvah (commandment) detailing some of the maintenance of the Menorah (Lamp Stand) found in the Holy Place, opens up this portion called **B'ha'alotkha** (say "Beh-hah-ah-lote-khah"). I want to study the Menorah in much detail, since it historically remains one of the most easily recognized symbols used in Judaism today. As such, it has become the national symbol of the State of Isra'el, in conjunction with the Star of David.

Let's move on into our parashah. This lamp, if you will remember from **Parashat Tetzaveh** was formed from a solid piece of pure gold. It is believed that this lamp weighed as much as sixty-six pounds! This was no light structure (pardon the pun). The instructions here in Numbers give us a clue as to the specific facing of the Menorah. Much of what we know about the Lamp-stand has already been detailed for us in past parash'ot. I shall draw upon past commentaries as the need arises. Finally, I shall take a look into the somewhat "mysterious" world of sod (hidden meanings and word pictures behind the Hebrew text, sometimes called 'Bible codes') for this week's description of the Menorah. First, the p'shat (plain) and midrash (homily).

The "light" and "The Light": Type and Shadow

The Menorah easily symbolizes the Messiah. How so? Yeshua stated that he is the Light of the World. The Menorah (the root word being "ner", which means "lamp") provided a glorious, eternal light to the priests who ministered within the Holy Place. Previous parash'ot describe the Menorah as having seven lamps.

The number seven in the Torah represents perfection. If the Menorah is a symbol of our perfect Messiah, then where in the Torah can we find a correlation to the number seven? Let's take a look at a familiar passage in Yesha'yahu (Isaiah).

In Yesha'yahu 11:1-5, we are given a vivid description of the coming Messiah. All rabbinical sources, as well as Christian scholars agree that this passage is a prophecy concerning the long-awaited Savior. The "Branch of Yishai" is a reference to his bloodline. Yishai (Jesse) was the father of Dah-vid the King. It was a well-known fact that the Messiah was to be born from Dah-vid's loins. The Torah describes him this way:

"The Spirit of ADONAI will rest on him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and power, the Spirit of knowledge and fearing ADONAI—he will be inspired by fearing ADONAI" (11:2).

As can be observed by my emphasis, the Spirit is referred to SEVEN times, and in an orderly fashion: (1) - the Spirit of ADONAI; (2) and (3) – the Spirit of wisdom and understanding; (4) and (5) – the Spirit of counsel and power; (6) and (7) – the Spirit of knowledge and fearing ADONAI. This is not an arbitrary use of words coined by the naviy (prophet). Yesha'yahu was writing under the direct inspiration of the very Spirit that he was speaking about!

The Torah frequently employs the use of "word pictures". These are phrases and words coined for the explicit purpose of calling the reader's attention to a certain Truth of the understanding of HaShem and his purposes among mankind. When the Torah uses the word "anoint" for example, the "picture" that is painted is one of a horn of oil (presumably olive) being poured out and down upon an individual. In the case of the High Priest Aharon, the Torah describes the oil as being poured upon his head as an anointing (Sh'mot 29:7). In our haftarah to **B'ha'alotkha** (see Z'kharyah 2:14-4:7) we will again read of this anointing property of oil and the Spirit. I can almost imagine seeing the oil as it runs down Aharon's head, down his face, into his beard, and down his shoulders, as Moshe makes sure of the God-given instructions. The oil is a representation of the Spirit of ADONAI! The Torah is explicitly teaching us that the office of Cohen HaGadol (High Priest) cannot function properly without the supernatural anointing from the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit)!

We know again, from the book of Hebrews, that Yeshua is our Great Cohen HaGadol. As such, he would also need to walk in this very anointing in order to fulfill his earthly ministry. What does the Torah say of him in Luke 4:16-18a?

"Now when he went to Natzeret, where he had been brought up, on Shabbat he went into the synagogue as usual. He stood up to read, and he was given the scroll of the prophet Yesha'yahu. Unrolling the

scroll, he found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of ADONAI is upon me."

Now this verse goes on to actually quote another passage found much farther into the scroll of Yesha'yahu (61:1-2, 58:6), yet Yeshua starts by announcing that the **"Spirit of ADONAI is upon him"**! When I compare the Masoretic Hebrew text to the Greek LXX (Septuagint) I find an occasion for a wonderful midrash.

LXX:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me; he has sent me to preach glad tidings to the poor, to heal the broken in heart, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to declare the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of recompence; to comfort all that mourn... I have not chosen such a fast, saith the Lord; but do thou loose every burden of iniquity, do thou untie the knots of hard bargains, set the bruised free, and cancel every unjust account."¹

Since our LORD was most likely quoting the LXX I like to think that what we have here is a double application, which amounts to a "play on words". His listeners would have immediately recognized the Messianic phrase **"The Spirit of ADONAI is upon me"**, especially since in the passage found within the Masoretic TaNaKH, the phrase from Yesha'yahu 61:1 reads, **"The Spirit of ADONAI Elohim is upon me"**. The title for HaShem **"Elohim"**, not found in the LXX, is likewise not used by Yeshua here in Luke. I believe that he might have even been hinting at the Yesha'yahu 11 passage, and simultaneously tying it into the Yesha'yahu 61 passage. In other words, perhaps he wanted his listeners to realize that he is the "mashiach" (anointed One) of both passages! But what of the reference to "seven"? Let's look at the last book of the B'rit Chadashah.

In Revelation 5:6, our visionary Yochanan (John) is given a glimpse of the Heavenly Throne. In his vision, he sees a Lamb who appears to have been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes. The Scripture tells us that these "seven" are the sevenfold Spirit of God. Whence do we find the sevenfold Spirit of God in the Bible? In our Yesha'yahu 11 passage of course. The Spirit is described as a total of seven, yet laid out in a pattern of one, with three pairs of two along with it. Does this pattern look familiar? It is the very same pattern that the Menorah was fashioned into! The seven-branched lamp consisted of one central shaft with three pairs of two surrounding it. Focusing on just the top of the structure, the following algebraic equation will demonstrate its pattern:

D---C---B---A---B---C---D

¹ <http://ecmarsh.com/lxx/Esaias/index.htm>

This is representative of the sevenfold Spirit of God! This is the very same description given to Yeshua—who is the Lamb that was slain!

Now we already understand that the Spirit, represented by oil, gave the lamp its light. Yeshua was empowered (anointed) by the "oil of the Sprit". Our current parashah instructs 'Am Isra'el to make sure that the Menorah faced the priest properly. As we shall see, this perfectly describes our Messiah, whose Spirit continually shines (faces) the Father in divine intercession. Moreover, his Face should continually shine upon our face, for the entire world to see.

Hidden Codes?

The above diagram gives us a description of the symmetry that went into the work of the Menorah. The following diagram will help to demonstrate what I am about to explain concerning a sod (mystical/hidden meaning) of Menorah patterns:

>...>...>...**A**...<...<...<

I want to read the first three verses of our parashah in Hebrew for us:

וַיִּדְבֹר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר

דַּבֵּר אֶל-אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּהַעֲלֹתְךָ
אֶת-הַנֵּרוֹת אֶל-מִזְבֵּחַ פְּנֵי הַמְּנוֹרָה יֵאִירוּ
שִׁבְעַת הַנְּרוֹת

וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן אַהֲרֹן אֶל-מִזְבֵּחַ פְּנֵי הַמְּנוֹרָה
הַעֲלָה נְרֹתֶיהָ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת-מֹשֶׁה

***(Vay'daber ADONAI el-Moshe leymor. Daber el-Aharon v'amarta
eylayv b'ha'a lotkha et-hanerot el-mul p'ney ha-menorah ya'iru
shiv'at hanerot. Vaya'as keyn Aharon el-mul p'ney ha-menorah
heh'elah nerotekha ka'asher tsivah ADONAI et-Moshe.)***

1 ADONAI said to Moshe, 2 "Tell Aharon, 'When you set up the lamps, the seven lamps are to cast their light forward, in front of the menorah.'" 3 Aharon did this: he lit its lamps so as to give light in front of the menorah, as ADONAI had ordered Moshe.

In the opening few verses of our current parashah, we learn that the actual, removable lamps, which rest upon each branch, “face” inward towards the central shaft, and consequently towards the center lamp as well (picture an “Aladdin’s type” lamp with a handle on one end and a spout at the opposite end

where the wick protrudes). Rashi confirms this in his commentary to these p'sukim:

Our Sages further expounded from here that there was a step in front of the menorah, on which the kohen stood to prepare [the lamps]. — [Sifrei Beha'alothecha 3] toward the face of the menorah. Toward the middle lamp, which is not on [one of] the branches, but on the menorah itself. — [Men. 98b] shall cast their light. The six on the six branches; the three eastern ones—that is their wicks-facing towards the center one, and likewise, the three western ones, the tops of their wicks facing toward the center one. Why [were the wicks facing inwards, thus giving off so little light]? So that [people] should not say that He [God] needs the light. — [Tanchuma Beha'alothecha 5]²

Rashi's opinion, however, is not universally shared. The JPS commentary to Numbers 8:2, 3 suggests other possible ways in which to understand how the lamps themselves were positioned:

at the front Hebrew *'el-mul penei*. If the intent is that the light should be thrown toward the central lampstand (2 Sam. 11:15), then the pinched lips or nozzles of the lamps atop the six branches would face the lampstand. However, one would expect the text to read “six” not “seven” lamps. Perhaps, then, the light is thrown forward (i.e., northward) toward the table, an interpretation supported by Exodus 25:37, where the synonymous expression *'al 'ever penei* clearly means “forward.”

3. **at the front** The fact that the idiom *'el-mul penei* is repeated indicates that the purpose of this passage is to stress the positioning of the lamps.³

I personally believe that Rashi's description is correct here. However, no matter which opinion we take, surely there were “six plus one” lamps for us to see. The focal point of the menorah is easily assumed to be the central, supporting shaft. This central shaft and light are known in Judaism as the “Shamash”, coming from the Hebrew word which means “servant”.

The Biblical Menorah is a heavenly pattern. Obviously, we should be able to gain this insight from the very fact that HaShem even had a particular way in which the lamps were to be positioned. The pattern of the symmetrical and equal numbers “facing” the central “servant” is the pattern that I want to examine.

The Menorah consists of 6 lamps, plus 1 servant lamp. In the first five books of the Torah, written by Moshe, there is a hidden “menorah”. Thanks to popular

² <http://www.chabad.org/parshah/rashi/default.asp?AID=36744>

³ Jacob Milgrom, *The JPS Torah Commentary to Numbers* (Jewish Publication Society, 1990), p. 60.

selling books such as the Bible Codes, by Michael Drosnin, many of you are somewhat familiar with a mathematical phenomenon known as equidistant letter spacing (ELS), a formula in which words hidden within the original Hebrew text are revealed using math. Having reservations about his work, I do not personally endorse Mr. Drosnin. However much to the surprise of many, there indeed does exist genuine “Bible codes” (if I can borrow the term without confusion) within the Hebrew text. This week, I shall reveal one of them to you here!

First we need to “construct” our Menorah. We shall use the first five books of the Bible thusly:

Deuteronomy---Numbers---Leviticus---Exodus---Genesis

In our above diagram, the books read right-to-left, just like you would find them in any standard Hebrew Torah, with the book of Leviticus serving as our “Shamash”. Now, using the pattern given to us in the first few verses of our current parashah, we shall see how the “lamps” of Genesis and Exodus, as well as Numbers and Deuteronomy “face” Leviticus”. First, Genesis.

In **Genesis** chapter one, verses 1-5, the Hebrew word “Torah” can be found if we count every 50th letter. Now, we must remember that Hebrew reads right-to-left, so our Hebrew word “Torah”, consisting of the four letters “Tav”, “Vav”, “Resh”, and “Heh” (**T-V-R-H**) would look like this in our text (beginning with the first “Tav” that we find:

H-(49 spaces)-**R**-(49 spaces)-**V**-(49 spaces)-**T**

In **Exodus** chapter one, verses 1-7, the exact same phenomenon occurs! Beginning with the first “Tav” that we find, the pattern is this:

H-(49 spaces)-**R**-(49 spaces)-**V**-(49 spaces)-**T**

In our “shammash” book of **Leviticus**, we find something very special! Instead of the Hebrew word “Torah” at every 50th letter, we instead find in the very first verse the Tetragrammaton Name (“Yod”, Heh”, Vav”, “Heh”, e.g., **YHVH**) of HaShem at every 8th letter! Beginning with the first “Yod” that we find, this is the pattern:

H-(7 spaces)-**V**-(7 spaces)-**H**-(7 spaces)-**Y**

The name of God is indeed the proper “central shaft” of our hidden Menorah! But let’s move onto Numbers.

In **Numbers** chapter one, verses 1-3, we find the familiar Hebrew word “Torah” again—as should be expected, at 50 letter intervals. But this time, since the pattern is symmetrical—as should be expected, the letters are backwards:

T-(49 spaces)-**V**-(49 spaces)-**R**-(49 spaces)-**H**

Finally, we come to **Deuteronomy** and the last branch in our Menorah. In this 5th book of Moshe we shall find something very special. The Hebrew word “Torah” is surely to be found in the first chapter, but this time, a few minor changes take place. Instead of starting with the first chapter and verse one, we start this time with chapter one, verses 5-8. Starting with the first “Tav” of verse 8, we count backwards towards verse 5, not every 50th letter, but instead every 49th letter—to reveal the word “Torah”! Our pattern will look like this:

T-(48 spaces)-**V**-(48 spaces)-**R**-(48 spaces)-**H**

Why the 49th letter instead of the 50th letter? Being somewhat of a Messianic Jewish mystic myself at times, and borrowing some of the reasons from the ancient mystics, I like to explain it this way: firstly, the book of Deuteronomy is the 5th book, so it is natural that the word “Torah”, the Five Books of Moshe, should begin (actually end) in the 5th verse. Secondly, the Hebrew title of the book is “D’varim”, which literally means “Words” (hint: plural for “Word”). Its English title “Deuteronomy” comes from two words meaning “Two (second)” and “Law” (Torah), thus, “deutero + nomos” = Deuteronomy.

Judaism has long recognized the book of D’varim as a kind of separate “book”—a sort of “second” book of the Torah, which stands alone; a kind of “smaller duplicate of the Torah” all by itself. The Talmud calls this book the “Repetition (or Review) of the Torah”. Moreover, the sages also agree that the “Word” is the mystical person of the Messiah (read John 1:1, 14)! In Jewish mysticism, the Messiah is known as “HaMemra”, another title that means, “The Word”!

According to the Renewed Covenant, Yeshua is the fullness of the Father in bodily form! We also know that he is the Word made flesh! So, using spiritual logic: if the “first” Word is HaShem, then Yeshua is the “second” Word! —that is, the Word which came after the first Word (in the hierarchy of the “God-head”). Hence, Yeshua is the “Words”! He is the “D’varim”! He is the “Deutero + Nomos”! HaShem is the “50th letters”, and Yeshua is the unique “49th letters” of our 5-branched hidden Menorah.

So using our acquired knowledge, we can construct our Menorah like this:

T-V-R-H...T-V-R-H...Y-H-V-H...H-R-V-T...H-R-V-T
 (>...>...>...**A**...<...<...<)

This equidistant-letter formula surely did not come to pass by accident! Neither was Moshe clever enough to construct it! No, this is the divine design of the Creator. I have given you this small look into Jewish sod as a treat—a sort of break from my usual format of Messianic commentary to the written text. I trust that you have enjoyed the break in routine.

The Rest of the Story

The parashah goes on to reflect both the graciousness and divine punishment of our Great God. The incident involving those who missed the first Pesach (Passover) shows that our God is sensitive to our needs, as well as our shortcomings. He could have just as well made those who miss the regular Passover, wait until an entire year had passed to participate. Yet, we find HaShem “making a way of provision” for those who earnestly desired to keep his Holy Feasts, yet were ceremonially not permitted to do so.

The story of Moshe, Aharon, and Miryam, as well as the quail, demonstrates the balance of grace and punishment. Lack of faith and constant jealousy (over God’s choice of leadership) would not be tolerated! God simply would not allow his children to be divided over issues of pride, jealousy, and lack of contentment. He rightly punished Miryam for her wrong treatment of her younger brother Moshe. Presumably, Aharon’s punishment was less severe because of his position as high priest. Either way, the Torah does not mention it directly here.

Moreover, the punishment of the quail should demonstrate even for us today that God’s hand of providence, whether it be manna or some other “heavenly substance,” should be enough for us to rejoice about! Why do we constantly want that which we do not have? Was the “grass really greener” in Egypt (B’midbar 11:5)? Compared to what HaShem provides us, I think not (no offence to present day Egypt)!

The closing blessing is as follows:

***“Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-‘Olam,
asher natan lanu Toraht-emet,
v’chay-yeh o’lam nata-b’tochenu.
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.
Ameyn.”***

(Blessed are you O’ LORD, our God, King of the Universe,
you have given us your Torah of truth,
and have planted everlasting life within our midst.
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.
Ameyn.)

“Shabbat Shalom!”

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