

6-06-26 Message to Roeh Israel Abilene – *Behalot'cha* (In your making go up [the light])
Torah Portion; Numbers 8:1 – 12:16
Haftarah: Zech 2:10-4:7
Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: John 15:5

The Light of the Menorah

Central question of this message: Is His light shining through you?

This week we are in parashah *Behalot'cha*. It is the third parashah of the fourth book of Moses, *Bemidbar* (“in the wilderness”), which commonly today also goes by the title “Numbers” in the normative church. Today’s parasha takes its name from the 16th through the 18th word in English, and the 11th word in the original Hebrew.

Num 8:1-3

8 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 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.'" 3 Aaron therefore did so; he mounted its lamps at the front of the lampstand, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־ מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: 8:1
 And spake the Lord unto Moses, saying,
 1696 3068 413 4872 559

דַּבֵּר אֶל־ אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּהִעָלְתָּךְ אֶת־ הַנֵּרוֹת 2
 Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him, When thou lightest the lamps,
 1696 413 175 559 413 5927 853 5216

אֶל־ מוֹל פָּנָי הַמְנוּחָה וְאִירֹו שִׁבְעַת הַנְּרוֹת:
 over against the candlestick. shall give light seven the lamps
 6440 4136 413 4501 215 7651 5216

וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן אַהֲרֹן אֶל־ מוֹל פָּנָי הַמְנוּחָה הָעֵלָה גִּרְתֶּיהָ 3
 And did so; Aaron over against the candlestick, he lighted the lamps thereof
 6213 3651 175 6440 4136 413 4501 5927 5216

כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־ מֹשֶׁה:
 as the Lord commanded Moses.
 834 6680 3068 853 4872

There are so many amazing lessons found in this week's parasha, but I wish to focus on one of them, and open the flower of meaning a bit more for you.

In today's parasha, we are instructed to give light to the menorah. But in a previous passage Let's read the passage.

Ex 25:31-40

31 "Then you shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand and its base and its shaft are to be made of hammered work; its cups, its bulbs and its flowers shall be of

one piece with it. 32 And six branches shall go out from its sides; three branches of the lampstand from its one side, and three branches of the lampstand from its other side. 33 Three cups shall be shaped like almond blossoms in the one branch, a bulb and a flower, and three cups shaped like almond blossoms in the other branch, a bulb and a flower — so for six branches going out from the lampstand; 34 and in the lampstand four cups shaped like almond blossoms, its bulbs and its flowers. 35 And a bulb shall be under the first pair of branches coming out of it, and a bulb under the second pair of branches coming out of it, and a bulb under the third pair of branches coming out of it, for the six branches coming out of the lampstand. 36 Their bulbs and their branches shall be of one piece with it; all of it shall be one piece of hammered work of pure gold. 37 Then you shall make its lamps seven in number; and they shall mount its lamps so as to shed light on the space in front of it. 38 And its snuffers and their trays shall be of pure gold. 39 It shall be made from a talent of pure gold, with all these utensils. 40 And see that you make them after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain.

The Hebrew word menorah carries with it some plain, and some subtle meanings.

In Hebrew, the leading particle, men, signifies “that which pertains to”. And orah is the feminine form of the word or – meaning “light”. In English, we could translate the nuanced word menorah as “it’s all about the light”.

We can learn about that light which it depicts by looking at its construction, which is unique.

You can read the passage a number of times, and still wonder precisely how to make it. If you were to give this description to ten artisans, each would make something slightly different. I have looked diligently for what I believe to be a depiction of precisely what the Temple Menorah must have looked like, and I cannot be certain I have found it.

This is, I believe, why Moses was first shown the design of the menorah on the mountain, and then was reminded of the design by this description.

I believe Moses directed the work on the menorah so that it eventually looked just as it did in his vision on the mountain, when G-d showed him the three-dimensional plans for this important item.

I can almost see Moses, as he looked at the menorah taking shape. Can you imagine him standing before the artisans, gazing at the work, closing his eyes, and then opening them again. Then giving instructions on what needed to be changed to make the object match the vision.

We don't know precisely how it looked when Moses finally said, "It is finished." But we do have some knowledge of the basics.

We do know that it was free-standing. We do know that it had a single shaft from the base to the top. We know that there were six branches coming off the single central shaft, three to one side, and three on the opposite side.

We know that it was to be made of pure gold. In spiritual imagery, gold represents holiness.

We know that the weight was a single talent of gold. That is 75 lbs of gold. In volume, it is about the same as one and a half times the size of a standard brick used in construction today.

We know that the central shaft, and each branch, has its own supply of oil, and each was fashioned so that it produced light (out in front of itself). We know that each branch had depictions of almond flowers and bulbs.

What is the significance of depictions of almond flowers and bulbs? Is there a spiritual significance to that? Of course there is. We must merely find it.

I find two remarkable instances of the mention of an almond tree, with obvious spiritual significance to each.

The first is when there was a grumbling in the camp, as to why Moses and Aaron should be leading. The L-rd devised a sign to show the other leaders that Aaron was to be the High Priest.

Num 17:1-11

17 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the sons of Israel, and get from them a rod for each father's household: twelve rods, from all their leaders according to their fathers' households. You shall write each name on his

rod, 3 and write Aaron's name on the rod of Levi; for there is one rod for the head of each of their fathers' households. 4 You shall then deposit them in the tent of meeting in front of the testimony, where I meet with you. 5 And it will come about that the rod of the man whom I choose will sprout. Thus I shall lessen from upon Myself the grumblings of the sons of Israel, who are grumbling against you." 6 Moses therefore spoke to the sons of Israel, and all their leaders gave him a rod apiece, for each leader according to their fathers' households, twelve rods, with the rod of Aaron among their rods. 7 So Moses deposited the rods before the Lord in the tent of the testimony.

8 Now it came about on the next day that Moses went into the tent of the testimony; and behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds. 9 Moses then brought out all the rods from the presence of the Lord to all the sons of Israel; and they looked, and each man took his rod. 10 But the Lord said to Moses, "Put back the rod of Aaron before the testimony to be kept as a sign against the rebels, that you may put an end to their grumblings against Me, so that they

should not die." 11 Thus Moses did; just as the Lord had commanded him, so he did.

What was the sign? It was a miraculous, overnight blossoming of what was obviously dead – a rod from an almond tree.

The second instance is found at the commissioning of Jeremiah as a prophet by G-d. Jeremiah rightly interprets what he sees in his vision.

Jer 1:11-12

11 And the word of the Lord came to me saying, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" And I said, "I see a rod of an almond tree." 12 Then the Lord said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it."

What did the rod of the almond tree represent here? I believe it represents the word of the L-rd, which has gone forth, but has yet to be fulfilled. I believe it represents prophecy spoken, that yet has not become fulfilled. That is the nature of the majority of prophecy that we have in our Bible today. Most remains unfulfilled.

Aaron's almond rod that bloomed seems to symbolize G-d's choice of his servant – and we can extend that to include future servants in the spiritual.

Jeremiah's vision of the spiritual almond rod that has not yet bloomed – shows us G-d is still “watching over His word.” But when the time is right, I believe we will all see that seemingly-dead rod of prophecy miraculously “bloom overnight.”

The three radial feet of the base are not merely good engineering for stability on an uneven surface. I believe they are spiritual as well.

I believe that they might well represent the triune nature of G-d. Each is independent, but each united. All act in concert to support the structure of holiness.

The central shaft and the outer branches also have spiritual symbolism and significance.

The central shaft comes straight from the “root” formed by the three feet at the base, and goes straight upward.

Yeshua grew up in a town called Natzeret, which means “the vine”.

Matt 2:19-23

19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, 20 "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead." 21 And he arose and took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he departed for the regions of Galilee, 23 and came and resided in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Yeshua drew upon this imagery in a teaching He gave on abiding in Him.

John 15:5

5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

The branches are like branches of a vine, or a tree. They do not stand on their own, but are supported by the root, and the trunk.

The longer branches are attached lower, and the shorter (younger) branches are attached higher. I believe this arrangement is important.

The longer branches serve to protect the shorter ones. We as more mature believers are tasked with the protection of the weaker ones around us, and some of us are called to give our very lives if necessary in that noble cause.

Yeshua is the “vine” and we the branches.

Notice how each branch, no matter how long or short, stands with equal dignity at the top. One is not higher than the other.

We have some Chanukkah traditions which shed some more light on the spiritual symbolism of the menorah.

The central light is called the shammas, meaning the “servant”. All other lights are lit from that central light. None of the other lamps takes

light from the shammas, but the shammas gives it light without diminishing its own.

As another lamp receives light on each of the nights of Chanukkah, I believe we demonstrate that the kingdom of G-d spreads slowly – as one soul at a time receives the eternal light.

I believe when we set the Chanukkah menorah in our windows each night, we demonstrate to the world that the Light of Life still dwells in our hearts, even after all these years of persecution.

I believe Yeshua drew upon the light of the menorah as it was being spread throughout the city of Jerusalem during Succot, as He gave this teaching.

Matt 5:14-16

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 "Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works [Heb. *masim tovim*], and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

I want to focus for a time on the base of the menorah. There are a number of contemporaneous depictions of it that have been excavated from all over Israel, and surrounding lands.

There is a carving from the excavation of a synagogue from the second Temple period in the village of Magdala, just north of Tiberias on the shores of the Kineret (Sea of Gallilee).

You will remember “Mary Magdalene”, or more accurately, Mary from Magdala. She was from that village. She may have attended that synagogue before following Yeshua.



The Magdala carving shows a narrow base with feet sticking downward at an angle. The menorah is shown resting on

a square, carved box.

And there is another depiction, found in the excavation at Tiberias of an ancient mosaic floor. Notice the three legs from the bottom, resting upon a square stand.



And a Roman-era mosaic shows precisely the same arrangement of three feet at the base.

Depictions of the Menorah before the destruction of the Temple seem each to depict three legs.

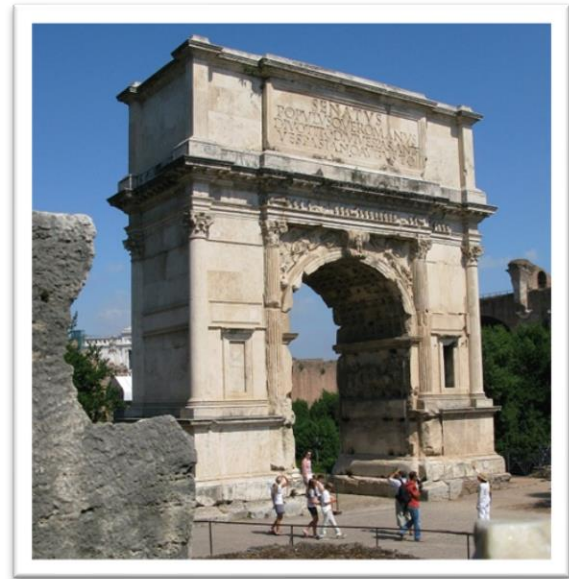
But we know that the holy menorah of the Temple has not been seen since the



sacking of the Temple.

Many today believe it was taken back to Rome as spoils of war.

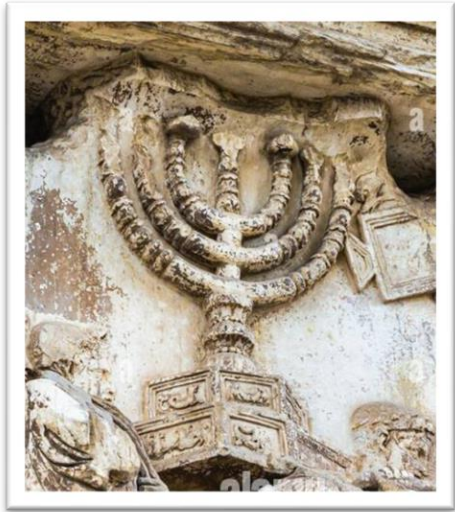
We do find a depiction of a menorah being taken by Titus back to Rome after the destruction of the second Temple. The Arch of Titus was built in Rome to commemorate his “great victory” over the Jewish revolt. Inside that arch, there is a carving showing the spoils from the Temple, including what appears to be the menorah.



Most modern menorahs are modeled after this depiction. But this one can't be the same menorah as fashioned by Moses, or even a menorah fashioned after the same pattern as set

forth in Scripture, because it's too big. Much too big.

It seems that the menorah shown on the Titus Arch in Rome is easily twice too big. If it were actually made of pure gold, the people shown carrying it probably couldn't have carried it casually balanced on a couple of poles.



And that's not all. Nowhere in any contemporaneous portrayal of the Menorah do we see a huge, solid six-sided double-decked base under a solid cone-shaped transition from the central shaft. And the carvings on the branches are only grooves – not almond blossoms and buds.

What should we conclude from this? Our people are not stupid. They knew for years, if not generations, that Israel would face conquerors, and that the Temple might be sacked. That the holy artifacts of the Temple might fall into the hands of pagans is unthinkable.

Also unthinkable is that the conquerors would not take every bit of treasure (in whatever form) that they could lay their hands on, back to their lands.

The nations around Israel knew of the treasures of the Temple. They knew of the Ark, the Table of Bread, of the Menorah. If they came into the Temple and didn't find those valuable treasures, they would look until they did find them.

So, how do you, as a thinking priest, trick the conquerors into thinking they have found the treasures – so they will quit looking - but you not turn those actual treasures over to them?

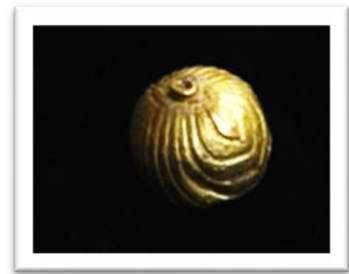
You do what many museums do today - and for the same reason. You fashion replicas which are close enough to be mistaken for the “real thing”, and before the plunder begins, you hide the originals and emplace the replicas.

I do know that the Temple mount, as well as under the City of David to the south, there are a number of natural and man-made caverns into which much of the Temple treasure was hidden during the siege.

Josephus tells us that people sought refuge in those tunnels and caves, and the Romans broke apart the ground to get to them. There they found a few living, but there were more than 2,000 people who had already died, most of starvation.

These remaining few living refugees were murdered, and what treasure the Romans could find was ransacked, but is it possible that the menorah was hidden away and not found?

Archaeologists, digging there today, have found many evidences of hidden holy things. They even found one of the golden bells – maybe one that was once tied to the hem of the tunic of the High Priest.



They even found a Roman sword, with its leather sheath still with it.



But I am most intrigued that they found also in those tunnels a small carving on a stone... depicting the menorah.

This crude scratched carving shows a level of urgency in the one who created it. It's as if he didn't have sufficient time to finish the work. Only two branches are shown on each side of the central shaft.



But it is accurate enough to show is an important aspect of the menorah that this person saw. Look at its base.

It shows three legs (two in side-view and one from the end). There is a gap beneath them. This is nothing like what appears on the one depicted on the Arch of Titus. But it is completely consistent with all the other depictions we have seen.

Could it be that this small hastily-carved stone marked the position – or a clue to the position – of the hidden Temple Menorah? Might the true golden menorah of the Temple still be resting safely in a hidden tunnel niche, below the Temple Mount?

Somehow I believe that we will see the true menorah once again, either in this world or the next. But we need not wait for the symbol of G-d's holiness to be revealed in a resurrected menorah. It is with us today.

We need not gaze upon the depictions of the almond blossoms fashioned in gold to know that Aaron's almond rod bloomed overnight. We need not see the light of the golden menorah to have a grasp of the light of G-d, and the holiness of G-d. Our light of faith is fueled by the pure oil of the Spirit of G-d and our light is our witness to a darkening world.

Isaiah described the attributes of the Messiah who upon Whom the Spirit of G-d rests. And I think it is no coincidence that this description matches the lights of the Menorah.

Isa 11:1-5

11 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse (central branch and light), And a branch from his roots will bear fruit
2 And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him,
The spirit of wisdom (1) and understanding (2),
The spirit of counsel (3) and strength (4),
The spirit of knowledge (5) and the fear of the Lord (6).
3 And He will delight in the fear of the Lord,
And He will not judge by what His eyes see,
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;
4 But with righteousness He will judge the poor,
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;
And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.
5 Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,
And faithfulness the belt about His waist.

Our people pray a special prayer during Shacharit (morning) prayers. It is called “Et semach” (the green shoot) which refers to the restoration of the throne of David and Messiah sitting on that throne as our King.

REBUILDING JERUSALEM

- **וְלִירוּשָׁלַיִם** And to Jerusalem,* Your city, may You return in compassion, and may You rest within it, as You have spoken. May You rebuild it soon in our days as an eternal structure, and may You speedily establish the throne of David* within it. Blessed are You, HASHEM, the Builder of Jerusalem.

DAVIDIC REIGN

- **אֶת צִמְחָא** The offspring of Your servant David* may You speedily cause to flourish, and enhance his pride through Your salvation, for we hope for Your salvation all day long. Blessed are You, HASHEM, Who causes the pride of salvation to flourish. see פסוק 1405

ACCEPTANCE OF PRAYER

- **שְׁמַע קוֹלֵנוּ** Hear our voice, HASHEM our God, pity and be compassionate* to us, and accept — with compassion and favor — our prayer, for God Who hears prayers and supplications* are You. From before Yourself, our King, turn us not away empty-handed,°

Zech 3: 8 !!
Psal 30: 4
Jer 23: 3-6

Our light has been kindled from that central Shammass – the Righteous Servant of Malachi 4:2 – and we have gone forth skipping about like calves set free from the stalls of captivity.

Let your light shine into this dark world. For I think I can already see some green shoots springing from the seemingly-dead almond rod that Jeremiah saw. For the Almighty is diligently watching over His word... to perform it. I read the end of the book, and much seems to be unfolding in our days. In the end, all evil is destroyed, and our Messiah takes His throne in Jerusalem!