



## Parasha Pekudei

March 9, 2019

*Torah:* Exodus 38:21-40:38

*Haftarah:* 1Kings 7:51-8:21

*Shlichim:* Romans 12:1-2

In today's *parasha*, *Parasha Pekudei*, the Book of *Shemot*, Exodus, comes to its conclusion. Everything required for the *Mishkan*, for the Tabernacle, had been finished and Moses gave an accounting of all of the contributions. ADONAI then told him to set up the *Mishkan* on the first day of the first month which was the first day of *Nisan* in the second year after the Exodus. The order for assembling the Tabernacle was specified and when it was complete and everything had been anointed with oil, the cloud, ADONAI's glory, descended on it. Whenever the cloud would rise and move away, the people would follow it. At night, the cloud became a pillar of fire. And, the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire was with them through all their journeys. Thus, ended the Book of *Shemot*.

When setting up the Tabernacle, the first thing Moses did was to place the Ark of the Covenant in the *Kodesh haKodeshim*, the Holy of Holies. 2 "On the first day of the first month, you will set up the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting. 3 You are to put the Ark of the Testimony there, and screen off the Ark with the curtain" (Exodus 40:2-3 TLV). <3> Next he placed the furniture in *HaKodesh*, the Holy Place. 4 "Then bring in the table, and set in order the bread that is on it. Bring in the menorah and light its lamps. 5 Set the golden incense altar in front of the Ark of the Testimony, and hang the curtain over the entrance of the Tabernacle" (Exodus 40:4-5 TLV).



In this depiction of the *HaKodesh*, the Holy Place, we see *HaShulchan*, the table, on the right with Showbread on it. A more accurate name than Showbread is Bread of the Presence. The Hebrew is *lechem panim*, or bread of the face, meaning "something which is before G-d." And, ADONAI commanded that the Bread of the Presence would be there always. We are looking into the Holy Place from the east toward the west. The *Mizbe'ach HaZahav*, the Golden Altar of Incense, is to the west directly in front of the *parochet*, the curtain, covering the Holy of Holies. *Kohanim* came into the Holy Place twice each day to burn incense to ADONAI. Burning incense was the duty of Zechariah, John's father, when the Angel Gabriel approached him in the Holy Place.

What we are focusing on today is the third piece of furniture, the *Menorah*, the seven-branched candlestick. It is on the north side of the room and its branches are oriented east and west. The *Menorah* can symbolize many different things. Yeshua's own words give us one possibility. He taught in the Temple during *Hag HaSukkot*, the Festival of Tabernacles, and on *Shimini Atzeret*, the Eighth Day of Conclusion, He said: 12 ..... "I am the light of the world. The one who

*follows Me will no longer walk in darkness, but will have the light of life*" (John 8:12b TLV). When He spoke, He was on the Temple grounds somewhere, maybe in the Court of Women in the Temple itself. The Court of Women was the largest space in the Temple and was the main gathering place for both men and women. As He spoke, He may have gestured toward the Holy Place where the *menorah* was located, but we don't know that. The *Menorah* was an important part in the life of Israel and had lighted the Holy Place for centuries. Yeshua may have been saying: "this object which gives light has always spoken of Me." "Follow me and you will no longer walk in spiritual darkness, but have the light of life." Yochanan announced to us that life in Yeshua would bring light into our lives:" 1 "In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 All things were made through Him, and apart from Him nothing was made that has come into being. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overpowered it" (John 1:1-5 TLV). The *Menorah* symbolizes Yeshua's light, His truth. And, if we choose Him, His light is our light, the light of men. Yeshua is the light shining in the darkness which overcomes the complete darkness of *HaSatan*, the Adversary. That is what I think of when I see a *menorah*.

We have a *Ner Tamid*, the eternal flame, above our Ark. Every synagogue has one and it is a powerful symbol of ADONAI's light in the darkness. And, it is a flame which never goes out. This little light is a symbol of the *Ner Elohim*, the Light of G-d which we see in 1Samuel 3: 1 *Now the boy Samuel was in the service of Adonai under Eli. In those days the word of Adonai was rare—there were no visions breaking through. One day, Eli was lying down in his place—now his eyes had grown dim so that he could not see, 3 and the lamp of God had not yet gone out. Samuel was lying down in Adonai's Temple, where the ark of God was (1Samuel 3:1-3 TLV). Since there were only three pieces of furniture in the Holy Place, the *Ner Elohim* spoken of in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel had to be one of the lights in the *Menorah*. And, it seems that Samuel may have been sleeping in the Holy Place in the Tabernacle at *Shiloh*. But, which of the seven lights was the *Ner Elohim*? It was the most western light, the one closest to the Holy of Holies. It remained lighted all day and was relighted only when it had run out of fuel. It seems to have been giving light even when others had gone out. And, it served as a light for other lights when the priests came in the morning to service them.*

In the year 30 CE Yeshua died on the stake and His death brought about some obvious changes in Temple worship, but worship was continued by His disciples in the Temple, even until it was destroyed. Many years later, the Jerusalem *Talmud* spoke of that time: "Forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the western light went out, the crimson thread remained crimson, and the lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand. They would close the gates of the Temple by night and get up in the morning and find them wide open" The western light which went out was the *Ner Elohim*, the western light of the *Menorah*, the crimson thread was the cord tied to the horns of the scapegoat, the lot choosing the goat to be sacrificed for the sins of the people came up in the High Priest's left hand rather than his right and the huge Temple doors after being closed at night would open by themselves. The lot in the High Priest's hand and the crimson cord on the scapegoat occurred on *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement each year for forty years. The going out of the light and the opening of the doors seem to have occurred every night for 40 years. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, the rabbi who was primarily responsible for reorganizing Jewish worship after the Temple was destroyed, was reported to have commented on those four things which happened during the forty years after Yeshua's sacrificial death. "Said Rabban Yohanan Ben Zakkai to the Temple, 'O Temple, why do you frighten us? We know that you will end up destroyed.'" (*Sota* 6:3). The western light, the closest to the Holy of Holies, had reportedly remained lighted all night for all of the years of the Tabernacle and Temple. And, it continued to remain lighted all night – until the year 30. Then it went out every night for the next 40 years. But, now, it is lighted eternally in our *Ner Tamid*, the eternal flame, which reminds us of the light of Yeshua and the light of His truth for all mankind.

Our message about the *menorah* moves now to the Island of Patmos. Yochanan, Yeshua's disciple John was there. John said: 10 "I was in the Ruach on the Day of the Lord, and I heard behind me a loud voice like that of a trumpet, 11 saying, "Write what you see in a scroll, and send it to Messiah's seven communities."" (Revelation 1:10-11a TLV). In the Spirit, John had a vision of Yeshua with a message for the seven Messianic congregations in Asia. John said: 12 "Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned, I saw seven golden menorot. 13 In the midst of the menorot, I saw One like a Son of Man,"... (Revelation 1:12-13a TLV). *Menorot* is the plural of *menorah* and Yochanan

saw seven of them. He saw one One like a “Son of Man,” a reference to the majestic picture of Yeshua in Daniel 7: 13 *“I was watching in the night visions. Behold, One like a Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days, and was brought into His presence. 14 Dominion, glory and sovereignty were given to Him that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will never pass away, and His kingdom is one that will not be destroyed”* (Daniel 7:13-14 TLV). “Son of Man” was the name by which Yeshua often referred to Himself. And, there was no doubt in John’s mind that this awesome figure was Yeshua. He appeared to John and brought him many different messages about things which would happen from that point in time forward. But, the message to the congregations was an immediate message for them then and it is a message to us today. Yeshua said: 20 *“As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden menorot—the seven stars are the angels of Messiah’s seven communities, and the seven menorahs are the seven communities”* (Revelation 1:20 TLV). The mystery of the seven stars is for another day. What is being emphasized today is that Yeshua used a *menorah* as a symbol for the congregations, a *menorah* which could be removed if the congregation didn’t live up to their calling.

Our *synagogue menorah* is similar to the giant *menorah* outside the *Knesset* in Israel. That *menorah* has become the symbol of the modern state of Israel. And, I believe that our *menorah* symbolizes our congregation, *Beit Shalom*, in Yeshua’s eyes and that he continues to look today at individual congregations and how they line up with what He has taught all of us. As individuals, we have a personal relationship with Yeshua, but we also have a relationship with Him as a congregation. It is important that we, both as individuals and as a congregation, have a living and growing relationship with Yeshua and not a lukewarm, complacent relationship as the Congregation at Laodicea did.

We are doing our best to grow spiritually. You are actively participating in our current Messianic Life study and I believe that we are all growing through of it. The Tabernacle in today’s *parasha* gives us a glimpse of the beginnings of our relationship with Yeshua and Abba. 34 *Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of Adonai filled the Tabernacle. 35 Moses was unable to enter into the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud resided there and the glory of Adonai filled the Tabernacle* (Exodus 40:34-35 TLV). Moses couldn’t enter because initially ADONAI’s *shekinah* filled not just the Holy of Holies, but the whole Tabernacle. Later, only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies and then, only on *Yom Kippur*. But, our Father wants to be with us and to have a relationship with us. And, Yeshua’s death has opened a way for us which was not available in the Tabernacle. His sacrificial death ripped open the veil covering the Holy of Holies and gave us access directly to ADONAI. And, since there is no longer a Tabernacle on earth where we are, we have become the Tabernacle in which He dwells. *Sha’ul* said: 19 *“Or don’t you know that your body is a temple of the Ruach ha-Kodesh who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own”* (1Corinthians 6:19 TLV)? The Greek word *naos* is rendered as Temple in this verse. Its meaning is given as “a temple, a shrine, or that part of the temple where God himself resides.” A better understanding of what *Sha’ul* said would be that our body is that part of the Tabernacle or Temple where G-d resides. And, that place is the sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, the place where G-d Himself in the Tabernacle and the Temple. Now He dwells in us, but in a part of us which is separate from the sin which goes on in our bodies. He dwells in our spirits which have been perfected in Yeshua. The Temple had sin in the outer court where sacrifices were offered, but the sanctuary, the Holy of Holies containing the Glory of ADONAI, could never contain sin. And, symbolically, that’s where He dwells in us, the only place where there is no sin. Even as Yeshua resides in our spirits which have been perfected in Him, He continues to call us to deal with the sin in our bodies and our lives.

The *menorah* as a symbol of our congregation has a message for each one of us today. This is not Scripture, but I believe it’s true: “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts!” This means that when you connect more objects together, in this case, lives dedicated to serving Yeshua, something greater emerges; something which has properties which do not exist in the individuals separately. That is the picture of a G-d-called congregation which is striving together to be all that we can be for Yeshua. 4 *“For just as we have many parts in one body—and all the parts do not have the same function— 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Messiah and everyone parts of one another. 6 We have gifts that differ according to the grace that was given to us—..”* (Romans 12:4-6a TLV). Even as we face increasingly greater challenges in the world of today, *Sha’ul* reminds us that: 13 *“I (we) can do all things through Messiah who strengthens me (us)”* (Philippians 4:13 TLV). *Shabbat shalom!*

