



B'ha'alotkha

May 29, 2021

Torah: Numbers 8:1-12:16
Haftarah: Zechariah 2:14-4:7
K'tuvim Shlichim: Hebrews 3:1-6

Our *parasha* for today, *B'ha'alotkha*, sometime called *B'ha'alotekha*, finds Israel in the Sinai Desert where they have been for about a year. They have been following all of ADONAI's instructions regarding the construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings and the consecration of the *kohanim*. With all that done, in this week's *parasha*, the *Levi'im*, the Levites, are being consecrated. They had the manna six days every week so that their basic food needs were met. For such a large group of people to remain in one place for so long they would have to have a very good supply of water. In chapter 11 we are given an idea of the size of this multitude. *21 Moses then said, "600,000 foot soldiers—the people I am in the middle of..."* (Numbers 11:21a TLV). Counting women and children, this would have been a group of around 2,000,000. Even to supply each member of this crowd with 1/4 to 1/2 gallon of water per day would require 250,000 to 500,000 gallons of water per day. That's a lot of water.

The traditional location of Mount Sinai is a mountain in the Sinai Peninsula called *Jebel Musa*, Arabic for the Mountain of Moses. Was there enough space there for two million people and was there enough water for them? Recent years have brought claims of *Jebel al-Lawz* in Saudi Arabia, Arabic for Mountain of Almonds, as the "real Mount Sinai." *Sha'ul* said in his *midrash: 25 "But this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem,"*.. (Galatians 4:25a TLV). But it is not our purpose today to try and determine which of these two sites is the real one. And they are not the only two contenders. A number of other mountains have also been proposed as Mount Sinai. But logically, *Jebel al-Lawz* does seem the best possibility. Wherever they were at this time, ADONAI supplied them with all the water they needed.

The second part of Moses' statement to ADONAI about the 600,000 men is: *21... "yet You say, 'I am going to give them meat to eat for an entire month'"* (Numbers 11:21b TLV)? And then this: *31 Now a wind went out from Adonai and drove quails from the sea. He brought*

them into the camp to about a day's journey in any direction, about two cubits above the ground all around the camp (Numbers 11:31 TLV). Nothing is impossible for ADONAI! A Biblical day's journey has been estimated to be 20-25 miles. Can you imagine birds being piled up 36 inches deep in a circular area with a diameter of 40-50 miles? ADONAI was angry because the people had complained that they only had manna and He really poured it on them. He said: 19 "You will eat—not for one day, or two days, or five days, or ten days, or twenty days, 20 but for an entire month—until it is coming out of your nostrils and it becomes loathsome to you! For you rejected Adonai who is among you, and you wailed to His face saying, 'Why did we ever leave Egypt'" (Numbers 11:19-20 TLV)? He sent the quail, but then His anger burned against Israel and He sent a severe plague. Today ADONAI doesn't usually strike us with a plague or kill us some other way for our lack of faith. But we do need to know that He is displeased with us when we are less than faithful to Yeshua. We received a greater gift in Him than those who came out of Egypt!

Our *parasha's* name, *B'ha'alotkha*, means "when you set up" and refers to the *menorah*. 1 Adonai spoke to Moses saying, 2 "Speak to Aaron and say to him: When you erect the lamps, the seven lamps are to illuminate the area in front of the menorah." 3 Aaron did so. He erected the lamps facing forward so they illuminated the area in front of the menorah, just as Adonai had commanded Moses (Numbers 8:1-3 TLV). The layout of the Tabernacle allows us to visualize the position of the *menorah* and where the light was going. The Tabernacle was laid out east and west with the entrance at the east end and the Holy of Holies on the west end. The First and Second Temples were also laid out in this same general way.

The *menorah* was in the Holy Place, the compartment just outside the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was located. The light shone forward to illuminate the Golden Altar of Incense and the Table of the Bread of the Presence which were opposite it in the Holy Place. The direction that the *menorah* shone was toward the north.

The Second Temple, the one which was standing in Yeshua's day, had all of the furniture in the Holy Place just as it had been in the Tabernacle and in the First Temple. But, the Holy of Holies was empty. In 586 BCE, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple, the First Temple. There is no record of what became of the Ark in the Books of Kings and Chronicles. But the extra-biblical book of 1st Esdras says that the Babylonians: "...took all the holy vessels of the Lord, both great and small, and the ark of God, and the king's treasures, and carried them away into Babylon." (1 Esdras 1:54). Among

the rabbis, there is disagreement with regard to what happened to the Ark. Some say that it was carried off to Babylon, while others say that it was hidden and remains hidden today.

But, ADONAI has also told us through Jeremiah that it will not be needed again. When Yeshua has returned and is ruling from Jerusalem, this will be the situation. 14 *“Return, O backsliding children,” declares Adonai. “For I am your Husband. I will choose you—one from a city and two from a clan—and will bring you to Zion. 15 I will give you shepherds after My own heart who will feed you knowledge and understanding. 16 It will be in those days when you multiply and become fruitful in the land.”* It is a declaration of Adonai. *“They will no longer talk about the ark of the covenant of Adonai, nor will it come to mind or be remembered. Neither will it be missed or another one made again. 17 At that time they will call Jerusalem the throne of Adonai and all the nations will gather into it, to Jerusalem, in the Name of Adonai. No longer will they walk according to the stubbornness of their evil heart”* (Jeremiah 3:14-17 TLV).

There is a quotation from the *Talmud* which we sometimes refer to on *Yom Kippur*. *Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai*, the man most responsible for the formation of Rabbinic Judaism after the Temple was destroyed, reportedly made this statement some time prior to 70CE and the destruction of the Temple. “Our rabbis taught: During the last forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the lot (‘For the Lord’) did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson colored strap become white; nor did the western most light shine; and the doors of the *Hekel* would open by themselves until *Rabbi Yohanan Ben Zakkai* rebuked them [the gates] saying, *Hekel, Hekel*, why alarmist thou us? We know that thou art destined to be destroyed” (*Yerushalmi Yoma* 39b). *Rabbi Zakkai* said: “*Hekel*,” that is, Temple, “you are going to be destroyed.” There are a lot of things going on in this prophetic word which the *rabbi* spoke about the Temple. The *menorah* formerly would burn 24/7 in the Holy Place. What this statement means is that the western light, the one closest to the Holy of Holies, would go out every night and had to be relighted each morning. Forty years before 70 CE was 30 CE. It's obvious to us who know Yeshua that all these things began to happen after Yeshua died for our sins. And as *Rabbi Zakkai* said, the Temple did wind up destroyed.

The most significant thing to happen during that 40 year period was regarding the crimson strap. One-half of it was tied on the horns of the scapegoat and one-half nailed to the door of the Temple. For 40 years before the destruction of the Temple, it did not turn white when the scapegoat died, the usual symbol of ADONAI's acceptance of the people's sacrifice. The crimson strap remained red and the Levitical Temple sacrifices of animals were no longer effective. Now, Yeshua's blood was the only blood that provided atonement.

Our *Ner Tamid*, the Eternal Flame, which you see here above and in front of the Ark, is a symbol of the western light of the Temple *menorah*, the flame that was the closest to the Holy of Holies. As followers of Yeshua, we see this light as symbolizing Him, Yeshua, the Light of the World. The 7 branched *menorah* is today the symbol of the nation of Israel, a symbol that ADONAI's chosen people are to be a light to the world. Right now they are a light but will soon become an even greater light and will fulfil ADONAI's calling as priests to the nations as disciples of Yeshau. We look forward to the day when "all Israel will be saved," as *Sha'ul* prophesied in Romans 11. We pray for that day to come soon and for it to create a great revival throughout the earth. Even right now, many within Yeshua's body of believers are preparing for His return to earth as *Melekh Mashiach*, King Messiah just as we read in Jeremiah 3.

In Numbers 9, ADONAI restated His command to observe *Pesach*, Passover. And He also provided a second Passover for anyone who might have not been able to take part in the first Passover on Nisan 14. It was one month later on Iyar 14. ADONAI also made provision for the mixed multitude of Gentiles which was accompanying Israel. 14 *"If an outsider living among you would celebrate Passover to Adonai according to the requirement, so he should do. There will be for you the same regulation for the outsider and the native of the land"* (Numbers 9:14 TLV). This statement, *"there will be for you the same regulation for the outsider and the native of the land,"* is made 4 times in *Torah*. In addition to Numbers 9:14, it is also found in Leviticus 24:22, Numbers 15:15 and Numbers 15:16.

There is a good bit of disagreement among Yeshua's followers today regarding how these verses should be interpreted. If we agree that *Sha'ul's* metaphor in Romans 11 means that non-Jews join Jews in the Commonwealth of Israel by being grafted into the Jewish olive tree, then it must also be understood that non-Jews who have trusted Yeshua also enter into the same covenants as Jews, Israel in the flesh. Ephesians 2 makes this "same law for the ger as for the native born" even clearer. 11 *"Therefore, keep in mind that once you—Gentiles in the flesh—were called "uncircumcision" by those called "circumcision" (which is performed on flesh by hand). 12 At that time you were separate from Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world"* (Ephesians 2:11-12 TLV). *Sha'ul* was speaking about Gentile pagans. They were outside of G-d's promises that He had given to Israel. *Sha'ul* says that these Gentile pagans were foreigners to the covenants of promise. It is plural, "covenants." The word "commonwealth" is translated from the Greek, *politea* (pol-ee-ti'-ah) and it means

"citizenship." Being a member of the Commonwealth means that you are a citizen of Israel. The next verse says: 13 *"But now in Messiah Yeshua, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of the Messiah"* (Ephesians 2:13 TLV). Yeshua's holy blood brings Gentiles who have trusted in His sacrificial death near Israel's promises and into the Commonwealth of Israel. all Gentiles who accept Yeshua become citizens of Israel along with the native born.

The Covenant made at Sinai has been replaced by ADONAI's New Covenant, a covenant inaugurated by the blood of the lamb, Yeshua. It is a new covenant based on better promises, yet it retains the *Torah* given at Sinai. The Levitical priesthood has been replaced by a priesthood after the order of *Malkitzedek* and Yeshua, the holder of an everlasting priesthood, is now our *Kohen HaGadol*, our High Priest. While it is our solemn duty to keep this covenant, we can never attain salvation by "covenant keeping." Obeying commandments can never save us. It is only through the blood of Yeshua that we can receive the promise of eternal life. But conversely, keeping commandments will never cause us to lose our salvation. Some misguided and uninformed people say that if you try to keep commandments, you are putting yourself back under the Law. Nothing could be further from the truth. Commandments are made for keeping. Just as we give rules of conduct to our children, so does ADONAI. We are not being disobedient by keeping His rules and neither are our children being disobedient by following our rules. We are to keep them, but keeping them will not save us.

ADONAI has said that there is one law for the *ger*, the Gentile who has trusted Yeshua, and the same law for the Jew. We all, Messianic Jews and Messianic Gentiles, are to follow *Torah* which can be followed today. I am speaking for those who have been called into Messianic Judaism and particularly for those of us here at *Beit Shalom*. Other leaders must lead according to what they believe. Regarding the Scripture about the eating of Passover, it means today that there is no need to circumcise Gentiles in order for them to be able to eat it. That is because no one can eat it, neither Jew nor Gentile. Without a Temple and a Levitical priesthood to sacrifice the lambs according to *Torah*, the Passover lamb cannot be eaten. And all of this must take place in Israel, only in Israel. What this means today is that because no one eats the Passover lamb, all of our Passovers are memorial Passovers. So there is no need to worry about who eats and who doesn't eat. Today, we can only keep the *mitzvot* which do not require priests and Temple. We can't keep Passover as *Torah* commands it to be done, but we can keep it as a memorial until Yeshua returns.

When we think about the *menorah*, we think about light, and almost immediately we think of Yeshua's words in John chapter 8. 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). He spoke these words immediately after the episode with the woman caught in adultery which we read about last week. Yeshua is the "*Or HaOlam*," the light of the world, the light Who has commanded us to be a light to the world. We remind ourselves of this each Friday night as we light our *Shabbat* candles. The wife prays: *Baruch atah ADONAI, Eloheinu melech ha'olam, asher kid'shanu bid'varecha v'natan lanu et Yeshua M'shicheinu, v'tzivanu l'hiyot or la'olam. Amein.* "Blessed are You, ADONAI our G-d, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us by Your Word and has given us Yeshua our Messiah, who commanded us to be a light to the world." Amen. In this blessing we see two truths; 1) Yeshua is the light of the world and 2) He has commanded us to be a light to the world.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua said: 14 *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on a lampstand so it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men so they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 5:14-16 TLV). What is the *p'shat* of these verses about light? The *P'shat* is the simple and direct understanding of something said at the time that it was said; its plain meaning. When Yeshua spoke about light and everything else that He said in Matthew chapters 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount, He was making a *d'rash*, a sermon. A deeper understanding of what He was saying, is that He, Yeshua, the second Moses, was also bringing a message to Israel on a mountain. Moses taught Israel at Mount Sinai. But, ADONAI also said to Moses in his closing days as Israel's leader: 18 *"I will raise up a prophet like you (Moses) for them from among their brothers. I will put My words in his mouth, and he will speak to them all that I command him"*. (Deuteronomy 18:18 TLV). Our *Ketuvim Shlichim* reading today says: 5 *"Now Moses surely was faithful in all God's house as a servant, for a witness of things to be spoken later. 6 But Messiah, as Son, is over God's house – and we are His house, if we hold firm to our boldness and what we are proud to hope"* (Hebrews 3:5-6 TLV). Do you see the connection? Yeshua was teaching His disciples for dissemination to the Israel of His day how they were to relate to ADONAI and His commands. Every one of Yeshua's statements in Matthew chapters 5-7 have their basis in *Torah*. There is nothing new here. It was Yeshua's way of encouraging them in their struggles with life; all of it from *Torah*. In His *d'rash*, Yeshua declares in verses 17-19 of chapter 5 that not one small letter of *Torah* has been done away

with or will be done away with. This was not something new to His disciples whom He was training, but an interpretation and exhortation of *Torah* for them to go and teach others.

At the time Yeshua spoke the words of the Sermon on the Mount, the *p'shat*, the simple and direct meaning, applied only to His Jewish disciples and to the nation of Israel. They were the ones called to be “light.” This was given to no one else at that time. But, ultimately in Matthew 18, before He ascended to His Father, Yeshua expanded the audience and commanded His disciples to go to the nations and teach them everything which He had taught them. But, during His earthly ministry in Israel, His message was only directed to Israel, the descendants of Abraham; the Jews.

After Yeshua ascended to the Father, His disciples did take His teachings to the nations. I believe that what they taught is the same theology of Messianic Judaism which we teach today. It was and is the same as Yeshua’s explanation of *Torah* to His disciples. Within a few short years after Yeshua’s death, Gentiles were welcomed into the Movement as a continuing fulfilment of ADONAI’s love and His eternal plan. The way that Scripture was understood for the first one hundred years or more was the message of Messianic Judaism with the *Torah* as authority and instruction for Yeshua’s followers. The early Messianic Jews and Gentiles worshiped on the seventh day Sabbath and kept ADONAI’s Festivals. *Sha’ul* taught and wrote his letters based on Scripture. The Scripture references in all of his letters are to passages from the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible, and from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. He said to Timothy: 16 “*All Scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for restoration, and for training in righteousness, 17 so that the person belonging to God may be capable, fully equipped for every good deed*” (2Timothy 3:16 TLV). The *Tanakh* was the authority for his letters. When he wrote his letters, not only was the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible, “all Scripture,” but the “only” Scripture. The collection of letters and writings which were just beginning to be produced by Yeshua’s disciples, including this letter to Timothy, were just that: “letters and writings.” They did not come to be considered Scripture by the larger body of Messiah until the year 367 CE, some 300 years later. In Yeshua’s disciple’s days, the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible, was the only accepted Scripture. The point I’m making is that the earliest expression of Messianic Judaism for both Jews and Gentiles, was based on *Torah*. And, it was very clear in the area of Messianic worship, fellowship and instruction, that everything about it was Jewish. The Messiah was Jewish, the Disciples were Jewish and the *Torah* was Jewish. And the followers of Yeshua, both Jew and Gentile, worshipped and understood Scripture in a Jewish way.

The Messianic Jewish Movement of today, which is now 54 years old, is ADONAI's modern restoration of 1st century Messianic Judaism. He has restored it as a part of His eternal purpose. I believe that one of ADONAI's reasons for restoring Messianic Judaism today, at the end of days, is to show some of Yeshua's followers that Israel in the flesh, His chosen people, the Jews, have not been replaced. Replacement Theology, or Supersessionism, is widespread in the Church today. Denominations which represent more than 50% of the total Church teach that "The Church" has replaced Israel and is "the New Israel." And many of them are involved in the anti semitic BDS movement. The presence of Messianic Judaism is ADONAI's message to Yeshua's followers in the Church that He has not cast away His people Israel, the Jews. Their wrong teaching regarding Israel is something which ADONAI wishes to correct. And those of us who teach Messianic Judaism are not seeking to change Christianity into Messianic Judaism, but to restore the truth of ADONAI's message to mankind – that His plan is given through Israel and is Jewish from beginning to end.

We are the light. Just as the light of the *Menorah* in the Tabernacle, Yeshua's light, shone forward on the Golden Altar of Incense and the Table of Showbread, so is our light to shine forward. We are to shine forward with truth, to be witnesses to all those around us, that ADONAI is restoring Messianic Israel today because His Son Yeshua will soon return. To be a part of this, we must have a divinely inspired vision and calling. Those of us in Messianic Judaism are not a part of it just because we want to learn about *Torah*. We are here because we have been called to be a light to two different groups, the *Goy Kadosh*, the Holy Nation of Israel, and a light to the *Goyim*, the Gentile nations.

I received an article from my good friend Rabbi Ya'acov Zamstein this week about *Parasha B'ha'alotkha*. The article makes a very good point about the *Menorah*. It is about the *Rambam's* disagreement with *Rashi's d'rash* on the *menorah* in this *parasha*. *Rabbi Moses Ben Maimon*, who was called the *Rambam* and also *Maimonides*, lived in the 12th and 13th centuries. *Rabbi Shlomo Yitchaki*, called *Rashi*, lived in the 11th and 12th centuries. The discussion was about whether Aaron's honor of lighting the *Menorah* was less or greater than the honor of the offerings brought by the tribes. The *Rambam*, who lived after *Rashi*, of course had the last word. He said that Aaron had the greater honor because the *Menorah* would continue to be kindled by families all over the world even after the Temple was no longer standing. So the *mitzvah* of the *Menorah*, unlike the inauguration offerings of the tribes, was not a one-time thing. It was eternal.

All of us in the “Commonwealth of Israel,” both native born and *ger*, are now a part of that eternal *mitzvah*. When we light our *Shabbat* candles, we symbolically light the *menorah*. When we look at the *Ner Tamid* here in the synagogue, we are symbolically lighting the *menorah*. When we look upon the *menorah* next to the Ark here in the synagogue, we are symbolically lighting the *menorah*. The *menorah* is now a symbol of the Nation of Israel, a symbol of the beginning of ADONAI’s restoration of Israel as the “Israel of G-d,” the final fulfillment of His plan made before the foundation of the earth. We are a part of His plan. Our light is necessary to shine on the truth about Yeshua and His Word. In that coming day, Yeshua will rule and reign over all the earth, all will know G-d, and the earth and its people will have *shalom*. *Shabbat shalom!*