

"WHEN YOU KINDLE THE LAMPS"

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Parashat Beha'alotekha starts (8:1-4) with Moshe's command to Aharon to light the Menora (Candelabrum) and Aharon's fulfillment of the command:

God spoke to Moshe, saying: "Speak to Aharon and say to him, 'When you kindle the lamps, the seven lamps shall illuminate towards the body of the Menora.' And Aharon did so; he lit its lamps to face the body of the Menora, as God had commanded Moshe. And this was the work of the Menora: it was of solid gold, from its shaft to its flowers, all of one piece, like the image which God had shown Moshe, so he had made the Menora.

This gives rise to two main questions:[1]

- a. Why does this unit appear here? What is the connection between the lighting of the Menora by Aharon and the events comprising the narrative of Sefer Bamidbar?
- b. The command to light the Menora has already appeared twice in the Torah: in Shemot 27:20-21 and in Vayikra 24:1-4. Why is the Torah now repeating it for a third time?

We shall start our exploration of the significance of lighting the Menora in Parashat Tetzavveh (Shemot 27:20-21), the first place where it is mentioned — or, more precisely, the first unit focusing on the oil for lighting.

CONTRIBUTION OF OIL FOR LIGHTING

In Chapter 25 of Sefer Shemot, Parashat Teruma starts with God's command to take a contribution from the people consisting of all the various raw materials (vv. 3-7) needed for the Mishkan (Tabernacle), including "oil for lighting" (v. 6). The text then continues with a detailed description of the fashioning of each of the vessels of the Mishkan (including the Menora itself, 25:31-40). Afterwards, at the beginning of the next parasha (Shemot 27:20-21), Tetzavveh, there is an additional command to bring oil for lighting:

As for you, you shall command Benei Yisra'el (the Israelites), that they should bring you pure beaten olive oil for lighting, to kindle a light always. In the Tent of Meeting, outside of the Veil which is before the Testimony, Aharon and his sons shall order it from evening until morning before God; it is an eternal statute for your generations, on behalf of Benei Yisra'el.

The same command reappears, almost word for word, in Sefer Vayikra (24:1-4):

God spoke to Moshe, saying: "Command Benei Yisra'el, that they should bring you pure beaten olive oil for lighting, to kindle a light always. Outside the Veil of the Testimony, in the Tent of Meeting, Aharon shall order it, from evening until morning, before God always; an eternal statute for your generations. He shall order the lamps upon the pure Menora, before God always."

These two units present us with three difficulties:

- a. As noted, Parashat Teruma starts with the command to bring all the raw materials for the Mishkan and its vessels, and among these the Torah explicitly lists "oil for lighting." Why, then, is there a need for a separate, special command afterwards to bring oil? The question is intensified in light of the fact that of all the materials listed at the beginning of Teruma, only the oil is awarded an additional, special command.
- b. The special additional command is introduced with a unique formula: "Ve-atta tetzavveh," "As for you, you shall command." This is the only place in all of the Torah where a command appears in this particular form.[2] What is the meaning of this exception?
- c. Why does the command then appear again, for the third time, in Sefer Vayikra?

THE RASHBAM

To the first question, we may propose a simple answer: oil is a commodity that is used up. Hence, the bringing of the oil is not a one-time event; the stock needs replenishing from time to time. The command at the beginning of Parashat Teruma refers to the initial contribution of oil for the beginning of the Mishkan service; thereafter, more oil becomes necessary, and it is this need that is addressed in the second command in Parashat Teruma.

Rashbam adopts this explanation (commenting on Shemot 27:20):

"As for you, you shall command" – previously, God has said (25:2), "Speak to Benei Yisra'el, that they should take a contribution for Me" – i.e., immediately, for the purposes of the Mishkan. Here, however, the command is meant for all generations, to give oil for light each year. Therefore God says, "You shall command." It is a new formulation, because anywhere that the Torah uses the term "Command", it is meant for all generations. Thus it says, in Torat Kohanim (Tzav 1) and in the Sifrei (Bamidbar

1), "Every expression of 'Command' is meant for the time when it is given and for future generations as well."

Rashbam's explanation also answers our second question, noting that the unusual formulation of the command tells us that this is an ongoing command, for future generations as well.

Rashbam addresses our third question in his commentary on Vayikra 24:2. He maintains that the command concerning the Menora in Sefer Vayikra is a secondary issue that is subsumed in the command to set up the Table (ibid., vv. 5-9): part of the arranging of the Showbread on the Table is the lighting of the Menora, which illuminates the Table.

Rashbam's explanation is problematic, for two reasons:

a. The fragrances used for the anointing oil and for the incense are likewise used up, and they too must be brought again and again – yet they appear only in the general command, with no special, separate command afterwards.[3] Therefore, we must conclude that the fact that oil is an exhaustible commodity is not sufficient to explain the repetition of the command in Sefer Shemot.

b. It is difficult to argue that the oil and the Menora appear in Sefer Vayikra only "by the way," as part of the command concerning the Table. Firstly, if the Menora is really a secondary matter here, it would be mentioned only briefly. Secondly, and more importantly, the command to light the Menora appears prior to the command about the Table. It makes no sense that the secondary issue is mentioned before the main command appears.

Thus, we come back to our original question. Perhaps the purpose of all the repetition is to emphasize the special importance of bringing the oil. Why must the Torah emphasize this so strongly? Why is it so important? To answer this question, we must examine the commands in Sefer Shemot and in Sefer Vayikra in their respective contexts.

THE DUALITY OF LIGHTING THE MENORA

The units concerning the oil in Sefer Shemot

There is a noticeable uniformity in the introduction of all the commands concerning the Mishkan and its vessels in Parashat Teruma:

"And they[4] shall make an Ark... and you shall cover it...

(25:10-11)

"And you shall make upon it a rim of gold... (ibid.)

"And you shall make a Table" (ibid., v. 24)

"And you shall make a golden Menora" (ibid., v. 31)

"And the Mishkan shall you make" (26:1)

"And you shall make the boards" (ibid., v. 15)

"And you shall make a covering" (ibid., v. 31)

"And you shall make the Altar" (27:1)

"And you shall make the courtyard" (ibid., v. 9)

All of these commands are addressed to Moshe, and they are formulated using the verb "to make."

The command concerning the oil is different: "As for you, you shall command Benei Yisra'el, that they should bring you pure beaten olive oil for lighting..." (27:20). This is the only command in this unit that is addressed, through Moshe, to Benei Yisra'el. This point is emphasized once again at the conclusion of the unit (27:21): "Aharon and his sons shall order it... on behalf of Benei Yisra'el."

The Mishkan is built by Moshe. This fact may lead to the impression that Benei Yisra'el have no portion in it. The unit concerning the oil is meant to counter this perception: Benei Yisra'el's share in the Mishkan is the regular contribution of oil for lighting, every year. Moshe builds the Mishkan, but the construction is a one-time event. Am Yisra'el (the Jewish people) participate in a way that is ongoing – by bringing oil every year.

Thus, while the unit with the special formulation, "You shall command" describes Aharon and his sons lighting the lamps, the emphasis is on the fact that the lighting is done with oil brought by Benei Yisra'el. The kohanim (priests) are the emissaries of the nation, lighting the Menora on their behalf, using the oil that they have contributed.

The same idea is reinforced by the order in which the Torah discusses the various aspects of preparing the Mishkan:

- a. First are the commands to build the various structures and vessels (25:1-27:19);
- b. Then comes the command to light the Menora (27:20-21);
- c. Last is the sanctification of the kohanim and their garments (28:1-29:37).

The command concerning the lighting of the Menora by the kohanim precedes their sanctification; i.e., the kohanim are commanded to light the Menora even before they are

sanctified and ready for their priestly service. This may indicate that the lighting of the Menora is performed by the kohen not as an intrinsically "priestly" duty, but rather as the representative of the people.[5] The kohanim perform the lighting on behalf of all of Israel, who bring the oil.

We conclude, then, that the special command to bring oil is meant to emphasize the participation of the people in the lighting of the Menora – which is also their share in the Sanctuary, for all generations.

THE UNIT CONCERNING OIL IN SEFER VAYIKRA

The unit in Sefer Vayikra is almost identical to the special command in Sefer Shemot. However, it is this very similarity that serves to highlight the difference between them, which occurs at the end of the unit. In Sefer Shemot, the unit concludes with the words, "on behalf of Benei Yisra'el." In Vayikra, the conclusion is, "He shall order the lamps upon the pure Menora, before God always." This ending omits the emphasis on the people's share in the lighting, replacing it with the purity of the Menora and the fact that it is before God always. In other words, Vayikra emphasizes the intensity of the holiness of the Menora, which is "before God."

Sefer Vayikra deals with the holiness and purity of the Sanctuary, which is removed from the various impurities of Benei Yisra'el. Hence, as appropriate to this context, the lighting of the Menora is also presented as part of this entity of holiness. According to this description, the Menora is lit by Aharon and his sons as representatives of holiness. Accordingly, the command to light the Menora (in Chapter 24) appears only after the sanctification of the kohanim (in Chapter 8), unlike the order in Sefer Shemot.

TWO ASPECTS OF LIGHTING THE MENORA

Thus, the purpose of the dual description in Shemot and Vayikra is to teach us about the two aspects of the lighting of the Menora:[6] on the one hand, the kohanim light the Menora as representatives of Benei Yisra'el. This is the aspect reflected in Sefer Shemot; on the other hand, the kohanim are responsible for lighting the Menora as representatives of holiness; this aspect is reflected in Sefer Vayikra.

However, the unit in Vayikra, which emphasizes the lighting by the kohanim specifically in the context of their status in the Mishkan, still opens with a mention of the nation's share: "Command Benei Yisra'el, that they should bring you pure, beaten olive oil..."

Perhaps it is precisely because Sefer Vayikra describes the sanctity of the kohanim and their tasks in the Mishkan, creating the impression that the people have no share in these activities, that the Torah chooses to mention their portion in the holy service: the preparation of the oil and bringing it to the Mishkan.

THE UNIT OF THE MENORA IN PARASHAT BEHA'ALOTEKHA

The nation's share in the service of the Mishkan

Let us now return to our parasha. Chapters 7-8 in Sefer Bamidbar describe three events: the inauguration of the Altar (through the sacrifices of the princes of the tribes); the lighting of the Menora; and the purification of the Levites. The command to light the Menora here refers, seemingly, to the first lighting. The first lighting of the Menora takes place at the inauguration of the Mishkan; hence, the unit that introduces Parashat Beha'alotekha refers to the inauguration of the Menora.

Following the inauguration of the Altar, the Torah describes the inauguration of the Menora, and then the purification of the Levites. Why are these three events, which belong to the inauguration of the Mishkan, recorded here – in Sefer Bamidbar – rather than in the seemingly more appropriate contexts of Shemot or Vayikra?[7]

The answer is that Sefer Bamidbar describes the nation's journey in the wilderness as a camp with the Divine Presence in its midst and the relationship between the nation and the Mishkan. As part of this description, Sefer Bamidbar includes a description of the inauguration of the Mishkan from the perspective of the people: the offerings of the princes, at the inauguration of the Altar, symbolize the participation of the nation in the consecration of the Mishkan. The sanctification of the Levites is described specifically in Sefer Bamidbar because the Levites replace the first-born in the Mishkan service; thus, the kohanim are the nation's representatives in the Sanctuary.

At the beginning of the shiur, we asked what connects the lighting of the lamps by Aharon to the progression of events in Sefer Bamidbar, and why the unit about the lighting is mentioned here for the third time. We are now in a position to answer these questions:

Based on our analysis thus far, we understand that the Menora is special in that Benei Yisra'el have a share in it, through their bringing the oil. Actually, Benei Yisra'el's share in the service of the Sanctuary finds expression in two of the vessels of the Mishkan:

a. The Menora – by bringing oil.

b. The Altar – by bringing sacrifices.

It is no coincidence that it is in Sefer Bamidbar, which describes the relationship between the nation and the Mishkan, that the Torah records the inauguration of the Altar and of the Menora. The description of the inauguration of the Mishkan in Sefer Bamidbar focuses specifically on these two vessels, which give expression to the nation's share in the Sanctuary.[8]

AHARON'S SHARE IN THE PEOPLE'S SERVICE

At the beginning of the parasha (8:2), Rashi offers his famous comment:[9]

"When you kindle" – why does the unit on the Menora follow the offerings of the princes? Because when Aharon observed the inauguration by the princes, he grew despondent about not having been among them in the inauguration – neither he personally, nor his tribe. God said to him, "By your life, your portion is greater than theirs, for you will light and arrange the lamps."

Aharon's despondency is difficult to understand: after all, he is the main actor in all of the service of the Mishkan! Moreover, we wonder: why is it specifically the Menora that God offers him as "compensation"? God could have reminded him of all of the other services in the Mishkan.[10]

The source for Rashi's explanation is to be found in the Midrash:

"When you light" – what precedes this? "And it was on the day that Moshe finished... and the princes brought their offerings" (7:1-2), and thereafter, "Speak to Aharon: When you kindle..." (8:2). Previously, eleven tribes brought sacrifices, plus the tribe of Efrayim,[11] but the tribe of Levi did not offer... and Aharon did not offer a sacrifice together with the other princes of the tribes. He said, "Woe to me; perhaps it is on my account that the tribe of Levi is not accepted." God therefore said to Moshe: "Go and tell Aharon: Do not fear; you are worthy of a greater share than they." Therefore Moshe is told, "Speak to Aharon and say to him, 'When you kindle...' The sacrifices – [only] as long as the Temple stands, they are brought; the lamps, however, are forever before the Menora, and all of the blessings which I have given you to bless My children – they will never be nullified."

(Midrash Tanchuma, Parashat Beha'alotekha, Ch. 5)

The Midrash gives us the reason why Aharon is despondent. The princes have brought their offerings voluntarily and willingly. Each has offered as the representative of his tribe, and by virtue of the sacrifice, the tribe has been "accepted" before God. Aharon feels that although, owing to his official capacity as Kohen Gadol in the Mishkan, he has been responsible for offering a great many sacrifices, he is losing out on the opportunity to bring a sacrifice as an individual, and as the prince of his tribe. In other words, he wants to participate in the inauguration of the Mishkan not only as a representative of holiness, but also as part of the nation.

This explains why God consoles him with the lighting of the Menora. This is the only service that is given to Aharon, as the representative of the people, before he is sanctified as Kohen Gadol. Therefore, when Aharon seeks to take part in the nation's inauguration of the Mishkan, the Menora is the most appropriate vessel to express this.

We conclude, therefore, that the lighting of the Menora is not out of place in Sefer Bamidbar – the sefer that represents the nation's service. Even Aharon himself does not function here as a representative of holiness, but rather as the representative of the nation.

The above explanation fits in well with the Sages' perception of Aharon as a person who is connected to the people.[12] Aharon wants to participate in specifically that aspect of the Mishkan service that represents the entire nation. As the Kohen Gadol, he works in the Mishkan all the time as "God's emissary." [13] What Aharon wants is to be among the "emissaries of the nation." This combination is achieved through the lighting of the Menora.

PARALLEL BETWEEN THE NATION AND AHARON

In Sefer Shemot, Moshe is commanded concerning the building of the Mishkan and its service, and at first glance it seems that Am Yisra'el has no part in it. However, in the unit of lighting the Menora, we discover that the nation does indeed have a share in the service of the Mishkan – and its part is eternal, not a one-time effort like that of Moshe.

In Sefer Bamidbar, the nation celebrates the inauguration of the Mishkan through offering free-will sacrifices, and at first glance it seems that Aharon has no share in the nation's inauguration. However, here too, the unit of lighting the Menora changes the picture: Aharon is part of the nation through his lighting of the lamps. Moreover, the

inauguration of the princes of the tribes is a one-time event, while the lighting is for all generations.

AM YISRA'EL AND THE LIGHT OF THE SANCTUARY

What is the significance of these two aspects of lighting the Menora? Why is the nation's participation emphasized so strongly specifically in the lighting of the Menora?

The answer to this is to be found in the Midrash:

Metaphorically speaking, God said to Moshe: "Say to Israel, 'It is not because I need your light that I tell you to light the lamp, but rather for your own merit...'"

See: when a person builds a house, he makes windows in the house, since he wants the light to enter. So he makes the windows narrow on the outside, and wide on the inside. Why? In order that the light will enter from outside and illuminate inside. But when Shelomo built the Temple, he did not make the windows like this. Rather, he made them narrow on the inside and wide on the outside, in order that the light would emanate from the Temple and illuminate outwards. As it is written, "And for the House he made windows that were wide" on the outside "and narrow" on the inside (I Melakhim 6:4) – to show that God is all light, and He has no need for your light.

"Why, then, have I commanded you? To give you merit. Therefore it is written, 'When you kindle the lamps...'"

(Midrash Tanchuma, Parashat Beha'alotekha, Ch. 2)

The Midrash makes it clear that the Menora is not meant to provide light for God. God does not need people to light up His House. On the contrary, the Temple is built so that light will emerge from the inside and illuminate outwards.

Based on this view, we would expect that specifically at this special lighting, illuminating outward, Benei Yisra'el should have no share; it should be carried out only by the kohanim as representatives of the holiness of the Mishkan (as the lighting is indeed presented in Sefer Vayikra). However, the Torah chooses to emphasize the nation's share in the lighting. Why?

The Menora symbolizes the light of the Temple, emerging from it and illuminating the world outside. The Torah emphasizes that the entire nation has a share in this mission: the light of the Temple is closely bound up with the nation. Without Benei Yisra'el lighting the Menora, the light of the Temple will not have any effect outside. Benei Yisra'el's

actions also influence the light of the Temple – their transgressions affect the Temple's sanctity and purity, and therefore atonement must be made for the Sanctuary, on Yom Kippur, for all of the impurities of Benei Yisra'el.[14]

Observance of the sanctity of the Camp of Israel as a whole is essential to the Divine Presence dwelling in the Mishkan.[15] Thus, it is specifically through the vessel that expresses the influence of the Temple's light outward that God chooses to emphasize the role of Am Yisra'el, influencing the sanctity of the Sanctuary through their actions.

When Am Yisra'el observe the sanctity of their camp and bring oil for light, they are partners in kindling the light of the Sanctuary and disseminating it outward.

[1] Some other questions, which we shall not address within the framework of this shiur, include the following:

a. Verse 4 describes the "work of the Menora" as a solid piece – but this has already been made clear in Shemot 25, as part of the description of the Menora's construction. Why is this detail repeated in Sefer Bamidbar? b. In Chapter 40 of Sefer Shemot, the Torah describes the establishment of the Mishkan and the start of the Divine service in it, including also the first lighting of the Menora (vv. 24-25), by Moshe. How, then, are we to understand the command and its fulfillment in Sefer Bamidbar? [2] Most common is the expression, "God said to Moshe", or "God spoke to Moshe". There are a few places where God tells Moshe, "Command" so-and so, "Tzav et" (e.g., Vayikra 6:2, 24:2; Bamidbar 28:2; 34:2; 35:2), but the formula used in connection with the oil – "Ve-atta tetzavveh" – is an exception even in relation to these. (The Sages discuss the various forms of "commanding" in Midrash Ha-gadol, Vayikra 6:2, p. 114.) [3] Shemot 30:23 would seem to present another command to take these spices. However, from the continuation of the text it becomes clear that the command does not refer to an additional round of contribution by the people, but rather it is addressed to Moshe, telling him to take the spices that the people have already contributed and to use them to anoint the Mishkan and its vessels. (This represents the Ibn Ezra's understanding of the verse.) In addition, the expression used there is not "Command" (Tzav) but rather "And you, take for yourself" ("Ve-atta kach lekha").

[4] "Ve-asu" here is an exception in relation to the other commands, which appear in the singular second person – "Ve-asita." Perhaps the reason is that this is the first command. For further discussion, the reader is directed to the commentators and to the shiur by Rav Elchanan Samet at www.etzion.org.il/vbm/archive/5-parasha/19Teruma.php. [5] See the article by Gad Eldad, "The Location and Content of the Unit of 'Kindling the Lamps'", Megadim 27. [6] See article above. [7] We have discussed this question at length in the shiur on Parashat Bamidbar. [8] In light of this we would expect Sefer Bamidbar to describe the nation's share in the Menora, but a review of the unit describing the Menora shows that, surprisingly enough, only Aharon's role is mentioned here, not the role of the nation. The reason for this is quite simple: the unit in Beha'alotekha is describing the

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inauguration of the Menora; the bringing of the oil is extraneous to this context. [9] In the manuscripts of Rashi's commentary this excerpt is nowhere to be found, but the Ramban cites it and attributes it to him. [10] The Ramban raises these questions and offers answers to them. [11] This stands in contrast to the situation in Shemot (e.g., 1:2-5; Rashi, 28:10), where the lists of the "twelve tribes" count Efrayim as subsumed under Yosef, with Levi counted among them. [12] For instance, Avot 1:12: "Be like the disciples of Aharon: loving peace and pursuing peace, loving people and bringing them close to Torah". [13] Based on the Gemara in Nedarim 35b, which deliberates whether the service of the kohanim is performed as the agency of God, as it were, or as the agency of the nation. [14] See Vayikra 16:16. [15] See my shiur on Parashat Bamidbar.