

B'HA'ALOTCHA { בְּהַעֲלֹתְךָ } (When You Set Up)

Numbers 8:1-12:16, Zechariah 2:14-4:7, Revelation 11:1-14
A Messianic Jewish Commentary
by Hannah Neshet

This portion of Scripture, B'ha'alotcha (When you set up) begins with the commandment to light the lamps in the Tabernacle.

“Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to Aaron and say to him, When you set up (b'ha'alotcha) בְּהַעֲלֹתְךָ the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the lampstand.”
(Numbers 8:1-2)



The Hebrew word for lampstand, 'menorah', is one of the favorite symbols of Judaism. At the time of Chanukah, the first task of the Jewish freedom fighters (the Maccabees) upon reclaiming the Holy Temple, was to re-light the menorah.¹

The Coat of Arms of Israel shows a menorah surrounded by an olive branch on each side and the writing "ישראל" (Israel) based on its depiction on the Arch of Titus.



Knesset Menorah

The menorah has come to symbolize spiritual conquest –which we know is gained - not by might, nor by power, but by God's spirit.² This is a key Scripture from this week's haftarah (prophetic portion); and it is a key for a victorious life in Messiah!

We want to be strong and to possess the power to overcome all obstacles that stand between us and our destiny; but as the apostle Paul said, *“When I am weak, then I am strong.”*³ It is when we become painfully aware of our inability in ourselves – when we come to the complete end of our own strength - that God can demonstrate His miracle working power. Oh – to come to that dreaded, humbled, helpless place of weakness – in order that the strength of God would be shown as perfectly sufficient in our lowly state.

When Paul implored - not once nor twice but three times - that the painful thorn in his side be removed, what did God answer him? **"My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness."**

¹ See Book, Messiah Revealed in Chanukah, www.voiceforisrael.net/shop

² Zechariah 4:6

³ 2 Corinthians 12:10

To which Paul replied, **“Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Messiah’s power may rest on me.”** (2 Corinthians 12:9)

In recent years, I have been afflicted with weakness in my legs which makes walking difficult and painful. I have pleaded with the Lord to heal and strengthen me (and will continue to do so); but until He does, I am leaning on His strength and trusting Him to do whatever needs doing by His Spirit – and not by my own limited power.



We so often attempt to force changes; but we cannot drive out the darkness through violence. Darkness will disappear only through the gentle agency of the light. At Chanukah we sing a Hebrew song called Banu Choshech Legaresh.⁴ The lyrics boldly declare that we have come to banish the darkness; but it is only in the presence of the light that the darkness must flee.

Our mission is to be a shining light in the surrounding darkness; but (as this song reminds us) in order to shine more brightly we need to stand together with the other little lights: *“Alone, we are a little light, and easily overcome, but together we are a great light!”*

Come Let us Go Up!

“When you go up to light the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the candlestick.” (Numbers 8:2)

The Hebrew word which opens this portion of Scripture, *“B’ha’alotcha’ בְּהַעֲלֹתְךָ* not only means ‘when you set up’, but is also based on a Hebrew verb from the root word *‘alah’* – to ‘go up or to ascend’.

It is from this root word that we derive the word **‘aliyah’** – to ‘ascend’ to the Land of Israel. One who immigrates to Israel is called an *‘oleh’*(m) or *‘olah’* (f) which means *‘one who goes up’*. Those who leave the Land are called *‘yordim’* – meaning those who *‘go down’*. There are Israelis who leave the Land for various reasons (economic, desire for peace and security, etc.); but in Hebrew this denotes an act of descending to a spiritually lower level of existence.



A little Jewish girl who just made aliyah (immigrated to Israel)

⁴ Banu Choshech Legaresh song by artist Ya’akov Shimoni, album Ha’Or M’Tzion

Lighting the Candles

The word used for ‘the lamps’ { ‘ha’neiros’ הנֵרוֹת } means not only the lamps, but also the ‘candles’. Every Friday evening, as the sun goes down, Jewish women in most households light the Sabbath candles to welcome the coming of this special holy day.

As Jewish people in Israel and all over the world, we traditionally light candles in our homes at ‘Kabbalat Shabbat’ – on the sixth day at sundown as we welcome the Sabbath. The traditional prayer recited is as follows:

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Haolam,
Asher Kidshanu B’mitvotav, Vetzivanu l’hadlik ner,
Shel shabbat. Amen.* (For festival lights, substitute the words ‘Yom Tov’ for Shabbat)



Hannah l Lighting Shabbat candles (neiros)

Blessed are you, Lord, our God, King of the universe, who sanctifies us in your commandments and commands us to light the candles of Shabbat.

Some Messianic Believers (myself included) choose to adapt this prayer to declare that God has made us holy by the blood of Yeshua, rather than by His commandments. Some Believers do not pray this prayer at all, since there exists no commandment in the Torah at all to light candles on Shabbat. It is simply a Jewish tradition which has been passed down through the generations. The lighting of the candles represents an invitation for the light of God to shine in our homes.

Although, as we discussed in the last parashah, Naso, most of the ‘spiritual tasks’ are done by men, it is usually a woman who lights the Sabbath candles in her home. As followers of Yeshua, we may also remember that it was a Jewish woman named Miriam, who long ago who brought forth the Light of the World, Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah).

We also remember that we are commanded to be a light unto the nations and we pray that God’s light would truly shine through us to the entire world.

Light is so very precious! One of the Ten Plagues in Egypt was that of darkness. For three days they couldn’t even see their hands in front of their faces. Without the light, we cannot find our way – we stumble in the darkness - and then don’t even know what made us trip! **“But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.”** (Proverbs 4:19)

This is in contrast to the righteous whose light grows ever brighter! **“But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn that shines brighter and brighter until the full day.”** (Proverbs4:18)



Yeshua is the true light that has come into the world; those who follow Him need not walk in darkness but in the Light of life. **“That was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world.”** (John 1:9)

Yeshua said, **“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. ”** (John 8:12)

One of the main ways that we, as followers of Yeshua, can shine as lights in the world, according to the Scriptures, is to love one another and to refrain from arguing or complaining.

“Do everything without complaining or arguing that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world...” (Philippians 2:14-15)

We will see, later in this very parashah, the terrible destruction we can bring into our lives through the sin of complaining and ingratitude.



Letting Our Light Shine!

Aaron is given the commandment to light the seven lamps in the tabernacle. Only Aaron and his sons, the Cohanim (priests), were entrusted with such an important duty. The rabbis say that Aaron was chosen because of his reliability in performing such a menial task faithfully day after day after day.



The menorah (Byzantine mosaic in Israel)

It is easy to feel enthusiastic about a task that is new and fresh, but we need to master the ability of sustaining our enthusiasm, even once the novelty wears off. Even the most mundane chores that we do every day can be a joy when we do them ‘unto the Lord.’ God is not only interested in what we consider our ‘spiritual activities’ (reading our Bibles, attending congregation, praying, or sharing our faith); but He also wants to be involved in our everyday life.

God enjoys being part of every detail of our lives - whether we are working, playing resting, eating, or just doing our daily chores: feeding the pets, taking out the garbage, washing the dishes, folding the laundry or changing the baby’s diapers. One translation reads, “**The steps of the godly are directed by the Lord. He delights in every detail of their lives.**” (Psalm 37:23 (NLT))

Now we are all Priests (Cohanim) of the Most High God (1 Peter 2:9). We can arise and be a shining light for the Lord. “**Arise, shine, for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.**” (Isaiah 60:1)

We may think, “*Oh, I don’t feel very bright these days; I don’t think my light can even be seen.*” Pain, trouble, grief and sorrow may bruise our hearts and dampen our light; but even if our light has become dim, the Lord will never allow it to be completely extinguished as long as we are living for Him. “**A bruised reed He will not break, and the dimly burning wick shall be not quenched.**” (Isaiah 42:3)

As the little children sing, “*This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine...let it shine, let it shine, let it shine....Hide it under a bushel, No! I’m gonna let it shine....Don’t let Satan blow it out, I’m gonna let it shine....*”

May we refuse to hide our light under the cover of discouragement; or allow Satan to blow it out through trials and adversity. Our light that comes from the Lord, the ‘True Light’, is not meant to be hidden but to be like a beacon on a hill which beckons all to come toward the life-giving light.



Avi lighting Chanukah candles (2004)

This lampstand (or menorah in Hebrew) is a symbol of the light of revelation and truth. The church is to be a pillar of light and truth for all to see: "... **the church of the living God, the pillar and support of truth.**" (1 Timothy 3:15).

Yeshua called us (His disciples) the '*Light of the World*'. We are now to be His light-bearers on earth – we are to shine brightly for His glory. Our light is not to be hidden; but to be set high upon a hill for all to see. We are those lamps that are set up on the lampstand to give light that the world so desperately needs in this hour.

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house." (Matthew 5:14-15)

The Seven Lampstands

Moses instructed Aaron to light 'seven lamps'. What do the seven lampstands represent? In the book of Revelation, we are given a key to the deeper meaning through a vision God gave to the apostle John.

John wrote: "**I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a sound of a trumpet, saying, 'Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.'**" (Revelation 1:10-11)

Here, these seven golden lampstands represent the seven congregations (or churches) in Asia Minor:
"**Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band."** (Revelation 1:12-13)



John the Baptist on Patmos by Hieronymus Bosch, circa 1489

In John's vision, he saw Yeshua standing in the midst of these seven golden lampstands, "**and holding in His right hand seven stars.**" (Revelation 1:16) The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lamp stands are the seven churches described in the book of Revelation.

The seven golden lampstands do not represent physical structures. The word '*church*' is not used here to refer to a building of wood, brick or stone; but rather a group of people –

the Body of Messiah. In the Bible it is written, "**And fear came upon the 'whole church', and upon all who heard these things.**" (Acts 5:11)

God warned that He might remove the lampstand of a congregation if they continue in sin and refuse to repent. As Yeshua told the church at Ephesus: "**...or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place - unless you repent.**" (Revelation 2:5)

Further in the vision, John saw, "**Seven lamps of fire burning before the throne of God which are the seven spirits of God.**" (Revelation 4:5)

The menorah has seven branches, each one representing a different spiritual attribute. These are described in the Messianic prophecy in Isaiah chapter 11: "**The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him, the Sprit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.**" (Isaiah 11:2)

There are seven lampstands, seven stars, seven spirits of God, seven churchesIt is even in the seventh month of the biblical calendar that the fall feasts of the Lord take place which is thought to be the time when Yeshua will return.⁵



A reconstruction of the Menorah of the Temple created by the [Temple Institute](#)

Why all these sevens? Why not five or nine or any other number? It is because according to ancient Jewish thought, seven stands for perfection or completion. God created the world in six days but on the seventh day He rested because all was complete.

The church has Yeshua as its head and this Divine part of the church is perfect, whole and complete; but the body –the human element – could use some improvement. We are continually to be growing in love, joy and peace; being conformed more and more into the image of God's Son.

Paul said, "**Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Messiah Yeshua has also laid hold of me.**" (Philippians 3:12)

The lampstand was also made of hammered gold: "**Now this workmanship of the lampstand was hammered gold; from its shaft to its flowers it was hammered work. According to the pattern which the LORD had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand.**" (Numbers 8:4)

⁵ See [Messiah Revealed in the Fall Feasts](#) by the author through the website: www.voiceforisrael.net

God commanded Moses to make it out of gold according to the pattern shown him on Mount Sinai. Why are the lampstands made of gold and not bronze or silver? Gold



symbolizes something precious – of great value. Purity is like gold in God’s eyes; therefore He is refining His church in the fires of affliction – in order that we may come out as ‘hammered’ gold!

“He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness,” (Malachi 3:3)

Purification of the Levites

The Levites were chosen by God to be set apart and devoted to His service; therefore they needed to be cleansed and purified. **“Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and cleanse them ceremonially. Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purification on them, and let them shave all their body, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean.”** (Numbers 8:5-7)

The Levites were taken by God as His own in place of the firstborn who were spared during the Ten Plagues in Egypt. The Levites were given as a gift to Aaron and his sons (the Jewish priesthood) to do the work of service in the Tabernacle. Only those Levites between the ages of 25 – 50 could qualify to serve in the Tabernacle. After the age of fifty, the Levites were required to retire from active duty. They could stand guard but could not serve in the Tabernacle. We must also know when it is time to step down and allow the younger generation to take over in active service for the Lord.

We are all God’s children, but some are called as Levites, to serve God in a special way. Only this one tribe was found worthy to serve the Lord. Why? In the desert, only the Levites did not participate in the worship of a golden calf. The rest got tired of worshipping an invisible God and wanted a God they could see. God said not to make images and bow down to them, and yet we see saints and statues of Mary and Jesus being worshipped in some churches. We are not to pray to saints, or to Mary, but only to the Father; and Yeshua told us He is the only way to the Father.⁶

God is looking to and fro over all the earth to find faithful people He can count on whose hearts will be loyal to Him⁷, even if others go astray. We are to be a holy people – kadosh – which also means to be set apart for God’s special purpose. May we consecrate ourselves to be this ‘set apart’ servant of the Lord.

⁶ John 14:6

⁷ 2 Chronicles 16:9

Keeping the Passover – One Torah

“And the LORD spoke unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying: 'Let the children of Israel keep the Passover in its appointed season.’ ”

(Numbers 9:1-2)

God commanded the Israelites to celebrate the Passover now that they were free from Egypt. Egypt represents slavery. Since we have been freed from spiritual 'Egypt', from slavery to sin, should we not now celebrate the Passover to the Lord in remembrance of His deliverance and salvation through the sacrifice of the Passover lamb?



Lambs were used for the Passover sacrifice.

If a ‘stranger’ came to dwell amongst the Israelites, they were to keep the Passover as well. Gentiles have been grafted into the olive tree and have become part of the Commonwealth of Israel. The celebration of Passover is for all who belong to the God of Israel.

“And you shall have one statute, both for the stranger, and for him that is born in the land.” (Numbers 9:14)

Notice there was only one statute, one standard, one law (torah) for both the stranger (foreigner) and for the native born (Israelite by birth). Many non-Israelites were in their midst. Non-Jewish believers are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens in the commonwealth of Israel.⁸

Should we not all live the same way and celebrate the same festivals in the same manner – God’s way? Why must we have separate and different holy days for Christians and for Israel? How can we get back to the same statutes for Israel and for those who join us through the Messiah Yeshua? It is only through revelation of the Word of God and His Spirit.

The Second Passover (Pesach Sheni) – A Second Chance

God had commanded the Israelites to celebrate Passover at the set time (mo’ed); but because some of the men were ceremonially unclean (through contact with a human corpse), God made provision for them through a ‘second Passover’. This would take place on the 14th day of the second month of the year – exactly one month after the designated time of Passover.

⁸ See Ephesians 2:19

Have you ever had the experience of finding out that for some reason, maybe through no fault of your own, you missed out on something really, really important? Maybe you feel left out, cheated, or excluded.

You get this sinking feeling in your gut, knowing that others received the blessing but you did not. You may say, “*Why should I be deprived?*” I know I have felt this at times. Isn’t it a wonderful feeling to discover that, much to our surprise, we have received a second chance? This is exactly what God, in His mercy, did for the people of Israel in ancient times; but the good news is that we serve the same kind and merciful God today – a God of second chances.

Those who, for reasons of ritual impurity, had missed the celebration of Passover, were allowed the opportunity to observe the feast one month later, on the 14th of the Hebrew month of Iyar.

“There were, however, certain persons who had become ritually impure through contact with a dead body, and could not, therefore, prepare the Passover offering on that day. They approached Moses and Aaron . . . and they said: ‘Why should we be deprived, and not be able to present God’s offering in its time, amongst the children of Israel?’” (Numbers 9:6–7).

Moses inquired of the Lord regarding the petition of the people and God answered with an abundance of mercy: **“Tell the Israelites: ‘When any of you or your descendants are unclean because of a dead body or are away on a journey, they are still to celebrate the LORD’s Passover, but they are to do it on the fourteenth day of the second month at twilight. They are to eat the lamb, together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.’ ”** (Numbers 9:10-11)

Today, in modern times, because of the destruction of the Holy Temple, the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb may no longer be performed, either on the first or second Passover. However, matzah and bitter herbs are usually eaten on Pesach Sheni (The Second Passover) in remembrance of the sacrificed lamb.



Matzah (unleavened bread) eaten on Passover

This special day represents the ‘second chance’ that we can receive when we repent and return to God. Therefore, according to Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, 1880–1950), the Second Passover (Pesach Sheni) reminds us that with God, there is always hope – it is never too late – He can give us a second chance.

God had commanded the people of Israel, on the first anniversary of their Exodus from Egypt, on the 14th of the first month of Nissan, to celebrate the Passover at the appointed time and according to all the specific rules and regulations of the Torah.

“The LORD spoke to Moses in the Desert of Sinai in the first month of the second year after they came out of Egypt. He said, **“Have the Israelites celebrate the Passover at the appointed time. Celebrate it at the appointed time, at twilight on the fourteenth day of this month, in accordance with all its rules and regulations.”** (Numbers 9:1-3)

Yes, there are rules and regulations; there are proper ways and times of doing things; and yet we serve a God who is called ‘Rav Chessed’ – Great in Mercy – Master of kindness.

In the Temple they sang, “Give thanks to the Lord, for His mercy (chesed) is forever.” The children of Israel who were ritually impure (tameh) through contact with a dead body, or too far from Jerusalem, travelling on a distant road, should (according to the law) have missed the Passover celebration.

These people, however, refused to accept their exclusion. They said, *“Why should we be denied the fulfillment of the Mitzvah of Passover simply because of circumstances?”* And God gave them the desires of their hearts, which was to honor Him and keep His commandments. **“Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.” (Psalm 37:4)**

Like these determined Israelites, we must never think that because of something we’ve done that has made us impure or unclean, that we must always be on the outside looking in. We may have broken some rules and regulations, or missed an important opportunity, but this is never an excuse for despair.

Perhaps we have also travelled a distant path that has led us far from intimacy with God and fellowship with other Believers. We must always remember that there is nowhere we can run or hide from God; no place can be far enough away, that God cannot find us, catch us, and bring us back to Himself.

“Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,

Even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.” (Psalm 139:7-10)

We may ask for the mercies of God to give us another chance and bring us back into full fellowship and union with Him and with the community of God through Messiah Yeshua. **“I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known your faithfulness to all generations.”** (Psalm 89:1)

Yeshua taught us that we are to ask for what we desire and not to give up asking: **“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”** (Matthew 7:7-8)

Some of us are simply too timid. If someone says no, then we accept that the door is closed; but here in Israel, I am learning that ‘no’ does not necessarily mean ‘no’. It may just mean “ask again”. My eldest daughter, Courtney, is very good at this and I need to learn from her. She very nicely but firmly refuses to accept ‘no’ and persists asking until she gets what she wanted in the first place. Amazing! 😊

One night, I heard such a wonderful testimony from a brother in the Lord, who found out that he and his wife would not be able to have children of their own because of fertility problems. But God gave them another chance. They became spiritual parents to many children here in Israel and around the world and took in troubled Israeli youth, giving them the loving, stable home they never had.

I love what this brother said about his experience with God: *“God is not the God of No! He is the God of ‘instead of’. When one door closes, He often opens another.”* When we will let go of the past failures – things that didn’t work out as we had hoped – God will bring us a second chance in another way.

Another brother who came from a very difficult and dysfunctional past as an orphan in India, lamented on all the years he wasted without hope or purpose. But the good news is that God promises to make up for the years that the devouring locusts have eaten. (Joel 2:25) Instead of our former shame, we shall have a double portion in our land; instead of lamenting with regret, we will shout for joy!

“ Instead of your shame you will have a double portion, And instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion. Therefore they will possess a double portion in their land, Everlasting joy will be theirs.” (Isaiah 61:7)

There was one thing, however, that the Israelites who had missed the Passover needed to do in order to receive the blessing – they had to be bold enough not to settle for being left out; but to ask for their portion!

The apostle Yaacov (James) said that **“we have not because we ask not.”** (James 4:2) Therefore, let us remember the lessons of Pesach Sheni, and refuse to be excluded from the fullness of life simply because of circumstances or the mistakes of our past. May the righteous in Yeshua be bold enough but to ask God for a second chance.

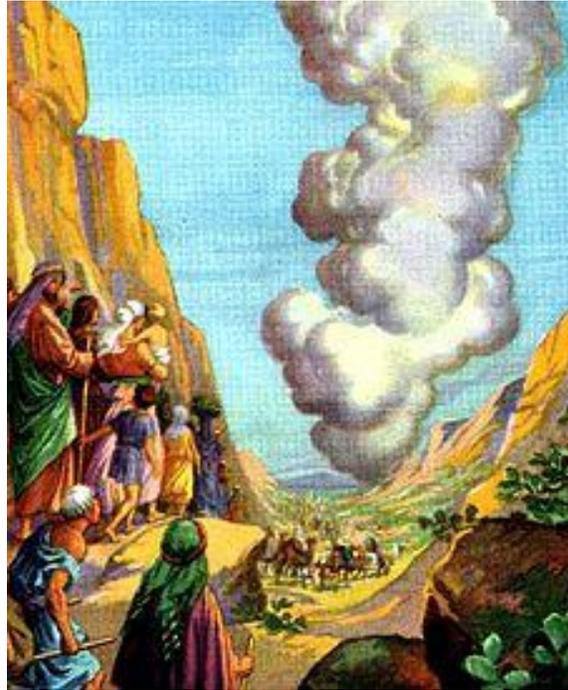
“The righteous are bold as a lion.” (Proverbs 28:1)

Moving under the Cloud

God faithfully led the children of Israel on their journey through the wilderness. He provided a pillar of fire at night for light and warmth; and a cloud by day for shade and guidance.

“So it was, when the cloud was above the tabernacle a few days: according to the command of the LORD they would remain encamped, and according to the command of the LORD they would journey.” (Numbers 9:20)

When the cloud tarried, the people of Israel remained in place, whether it was for one day or for one year (Num. 9:22). It should be the same for us with our walk with God. We should take direction from His Spirit. Sometimes we move ahead quickly and make great progress in a short period of time. Other times we simply stay in camp and wait until He gives the signal to move again.



God Led Them by a Pillar of Cloud (illustration from Bible card published by the Providence Lithograph Company)

Trying to move ahead of the cloud, without the manifest presence of God, will only bring frustration: as will lagging behind in camp if the cloud has long ago moved on.

Sometimes we resist change. We just get settled in one place. We finally know the neighbors, the babysitter down the street, the bus stops, and the best places to shop. Things are finally becoming familiar and a little more comfortable. We start to ‘nest’ and don’t want to leave its comfort. But we must, at times, move to remain under the covering of His cloud of glory.

Most of us are people who like some sense of security. My children sometimes complain that we have moved around too much. Once they all sat together at the table trying to count how many collective moves we have experienced. It was shocking actually! When my (then) husband lived with us in Israel, we moved every single year to a new place. After a while, I didn’t even bother unpacking most of our stuff. It gets tiring (understatement).



So now, I just don't want to move anymore; but moving under the cloud not only means a physical move. It may mean that God has finished with something and wants us to move on to something new; but no, we would rather just sit in camp and keep working on something that no longer carries the anointing of God. - and then we wonder why our efforts are not bearing fruit?!

If I travel with my child in my arms from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, then we can't really say that the child has changed places. She is still in my arms, whether in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. And so it is with us, just as it was with the Israelites in the wilderness. We may move from one spot to another, but our place remains constant – in Abba's arms – close to His heart.

“He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.” (Isaiah 40:11)

I love that! Yeshua is the Good Shepherd. We sometimes push ourselves so hard; but Yeshua does not overdrive the flock. He is especially gentle in leading those who are still caring for young lambs.



This can be a comfort to us in the midst of moving or travelling around, or just sensing a call into something new. When our physical location or work or relationships change, we can be aware that we remain secure, since we always abide with the Almighty.

The Silver Trumpets

These trumpets were to be blown when calling an assembly of the camp; to give the signal to move forward as well as on special occasions such as the 'new moon' (rosh chodesh) and festivals

“Make two trumpets of silver ...for the calling of the congregation, and for causing the camps to set forward.” (Numbers 10:2)



Blowing the Trumpet at the Feast of the New Moon (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

“Also in the day of your gladness, and in your appointed seasons, and in your new moons, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt-offerings, and over the

sacrifices of your peace-offerings; and they shall be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God.' (Numbers 10:10)

These silver trumpets were also used to sound an alarm, especially when going to war against an adversary. The Lord promised to hear and save them from their enemies.

“And when you go to war in your land, against the adversary that oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets; and you shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and you shall be saved from your enemies.” (Numbers 10:9)



When we find ourselves engaged in spiritual warfare and suffering under oppression, we are instructed to sound the alarm with the trumpets and the Lord will save us from our enemies. Often, the shofar (ram’s horn) is used for this.

Feast of Trumpets (illustration from the 1894 *Treasures of the Bible*)

In Israel, we experienced this personally years ago when Liat was just a baby and was suddenly struck with severe vomiting. She couldn’t even keep down water and yet was terribly thirsty. Her father and I prayed together. We anointed her with oil and prayed some more. Nothing. Finally, it dawned on me, that I had just finished writing that morning on using the shofar as a weapon in spiritual warfare.

I looked up and saw our big shofar hanging on the wall! My husband grabbed it and began to blow with all his might as we shouted halleluyah and healing scriptures. A few minutes later, the baby began to drink juice and hold it down. That evening she was actually leaping in the air with her little legs. What a joy! I encourage you to find a shofar and use it to call God to your aid when oppressed by the enemy in any kind of battle.

The Ark of the Covenant Leads

When Israel started their journey, the ark went out in front of them. **“And they set forward from the mount of the LORD three days’ journey; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them three days’ journey, to seek out a resting-place for them.”** (Numbers 10:33)

Why did the ark go first? This symbolized God’s presence leading, protecting and fighting for them.



Sculpture of Ark of Covenant - Mamila mall Jerusalem

Just as the people of Israel needed a visual symbol to give them courage and inspiration to venture into the unknown, we also need to know that God is going before us to prepare the way and provide a resting place.

“And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said: 'Rise up, O LORD, and let Thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee. And when it rested, he said: 'Return, O LORD, unto the ten thousands of the families of Israel.’” (Numbers 10:35-36)

This Scripture is read in the synagogues when the ark is opened and the Torah scrolls are removed for reading and upon closing the ark. There is a special reason for reciting this prayer when we bring out the Torah. Whenever anyone attempts to spread Torah, they will encounter opposition. Therefore, we ask God to disperse these enemies of His Torah and prevent them from causing Torah. We must anticipate that there will be those who try to stop us, and prevent us from teaching Torah to others. Instead, we may pray for the Almighty’s assistance, and that all opposition will flee!



Aron Hakodesh (The Holy ark) holding the Torah scrolls at the Kotel, Jerusalem

Kvetching and Other Sins

One thing that draws enemy fire rather than God's help is the sin of complaining. Complaining is called **'kvetching'** in Yiddish. This week's Torah portion is often called the *'kvetching sedra'* (the Book of Complaints) because in it, the Israelites protest, grumble, gripe and complain 'in the ears of God'.

“And the people were as murmurers (complainers), speaking evil in the ears of the Lord; and when the Lord heard it, His anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them and devoured in the uttermost part of the camp.” (Numbers 11:1)

In Jewish culture, we seem to 'kvetch' a lot; and we even joke about it, but really kvetching is no laughing matter. It is a serious sin which angers God and brings destruction into our lives.

Kvetching is no joke! It caused a journey which was meant to take only eleven days to be turned into an excruciating forty year period of wandering in the wilderness during which time all but two of the original Israelites who left Egypt (Joshua and Calev) perished.

How did the escape from Egypt which started out with such joy and victory end with such tragedy and defeat? It was largely because of their repeated complaining and murmuring which aroused God's anger.

In previous times, when the people complained, God was not angry. When they complained about having no water to drink and no food to eat, God met their very real needs and blessed them. Then why did God punish them for their complaints this time?

It was because they were murmuring and grumbling for no good reason. They had everything they needed, and instead of being grateful, they clamored for more. Unjustified kvetching is a sign of ingratitude. When we have justifiable complaints, however, we may present these before the Lord and God is on our side to help us.

King David said he poured out all his complaint before the Lord⁹. Sometimes we suffer from real lack or trouble. This is a time for prayer and possible action; but discontentment is contagious. Beware of negative people, marginal believers (the mixed multitude) who stay on the sidelines and complain. They may incite you to murmur and grumble about your situation when really, you have no reason to complain.

When we compare what we have with many others, we may see how abundantly God meets our needs; and we may be grateful rather than grumble. Since complaining is contagious, we owe it to others not to be a complainer, lest they 'catch' the same bad attitude. This is especially important in families. We must learn to see the good in situations and in others.

⁹ Psalm 142:2

The person who goes through life complaining does not appreciate all the good in his or her life. By focusing on what is missing, what has been supplied is all but forgotten. By this, the complainer causes himself to be miserable. We have an obligation to be grateful to the Lord.

We all complain once in a while. But anyone with this negative attribute as a character trait must make a concerted effort to stop complaining and instead build up the habit of appreciating everything we have. This is important, both for our emotional state, and our relationship with the Lord. We must try to verbalize our appreciation for all that others do for us, even little favors and kindnesses.

Don't Look Back

The Israelites' memories of Egypt became distorted. Whereas only a short time before, they were crying and groaning in their misery – pleading with God for deliverance - now they seemed to remember Egypt as being *'not that bad'* – pretty good in fact! They preferred the garlic and leeks of Egypt to freedom.¹⁰ How many people are in oppressive situations, or in slavery to sin, and God rescues them, - only for them to go back to it?

It is our human tendency to slide back into what was known and familiar, even if oppressive, rather than endure the uncertainty and challenges of freedom. Selective memory remembers only the good. My daughter and I were just discussing this at our last home meeting. She said, *"Isn't it amazing how people look back and don't remember how it really was. They think it wasn't really that bad, when actually it was worse!"*

Secretly, I had been having trouble coping with all the challenges of living in Israel and wondering if I had made a mistake in coming back to the Land on my own with my children. I began to think, *"Maybe it really wasn't so bad where I was....maybe I should think about going back...."* I really couldn't remember how soul-destroying my situation had been - the torment that God had delivered me from - until my daughter began to remind me. How did she know? But the Holy Spirit knows everything. He reads our mail frequently. ☺ We all need a person in our lives at times to give us a good reality check when our memory becomes distorted and selective.

It is good and right to 'forgive and forget'; but we need to keep enough of the memory of how bad the situation was that God delivered us from – in order that we are not tempted (as were the Israelites) to say, *'Let's appoint a leader and go back...'*

Inability to see into the hope of the future beyond our present trials and difficulties may cause us to want to 'go back'. Through my experience in escaping an abusive marriage, I came to know a woman in a woman's shelter with a black eye inflicted by her boyfriend. Although she sought refuge and freedom from this abuse in the shelter, I later witnessed her on the street with the same person who had oppressed and abused her.

¹⁰ Numbers 11:5

We must be willing to pay the price for freedom. It may mean facing difficult situations that we did not have to cope with when we were enslaved. We must not throw away our confidence that we have in the Messiah, because of present difficulties on the way to the Promised Land.

Discontentment Brings Death

“Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: “Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being *is* dried up; *there is* nothing at all except this manna *before* our eyes!” (Numbers 11:4-6)

The Israelites were not content with the manna God had provided them for sustenance in the wilderness; they cried and complained in utter ingratitude. This greatly angered the Lord and also displeased Moses.

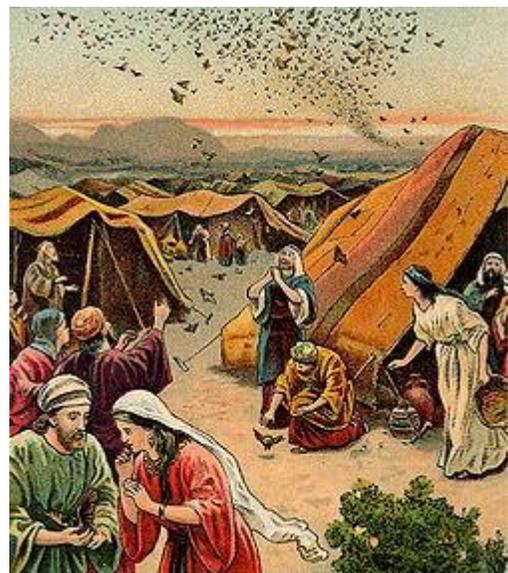
“Then Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, everyone at the door of his tent; and the anger of the LORD was greatly aroused; Moses also was displeased.” (Numbers 11:10)

I think we have a tendency to presume that whenever we are weeping about something or other, that God drops everything and rushes to put a bandaid on whatever ‘owie’ we are crying about. Now I’m not so sure that God is always pleased at the sound of our pitiful weeping.

Does He sometimes hear me crying myself to sleep at night and think, “*O ye of little faith, my precious daughter of Zion. Take heart and believe that I am the Lord. With me all things are possible!*” Yes, we can always pour our hearts out to God, but it is FAITH that truly pleases Him.

The Israelites demanded flesh to eat. Therefore God gave it to them; but instead of life, it brought death. God sent quail but while it was still in their teeth, the Lord struck the Israelites with a terrible plague.

“But while the meat *was* still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was aroused against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very great plague. So he called the name of that place Kivrot Hattaavah, קִבְרוֹת הַתַּאֲוָה because there they buried the people who had yielded to craving.” (Numbers 11:33-34)



The Giving of the Manna and Quail (Bible card published 1901 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

We must be careful of what we crave or lust after and demand from God. Lusting after the things we crave leads only to death; but sowing to the Spirit leads to life.

Just because we receive it doesn't always mean it will be a life-giving blessing. Contentment is such a wonderful quality. Paul said, **"I have learned, in whatever state I am in, to be content..."** (Philippians 4:11)

We can find godliness in simple contentment with that which God provides for us.¹¹

What can we learn from the example of the Israelites in this parashah? Like the cloud, we have also been given the sure guidance of the Holy Spirit and like the manna, God faithfully provides for our sustenance through the weary wilderness on our way to the Promised Land. However, we also tend to be a people who complain and murmur along the way at every discomfort and inconvenience.



A Plague Inflicted on Israel While Eating the Quail (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

In the beginning of this parashah we spoke about the seven lampstands and the agency of the light. One of the ways that we may shine as lights in the midst of the darkness of a perverse generation is by refusing to complain along the way; but instead being thankful in all things and rejoicing in the Lord always.

"Do everything without complaining or arguing so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world." (Philippians 2:14-15)

Moses Interceded for Sinners

Even though the Israelites caused him so much trouble and grief, Moses still prayed for the people to be spared. Even when people in our lives are behaving badly and reaping the consequences of their foolish choices and sinful actions, we can still maintain an attitude of mercy and plead with God to relent on their behalf. Mercy triumphs over judgment. (James 2:13)

¹¹ 1 Timothy 6:6

It is not for us, as Believers, to stand by and watch people suffering and think, “*You had it coming. You deserve this!*” No, we all deserve only death and hell, but in Yeshua we have found mercy and grace. Therefore, we are called to intercede for people in trouble. We can always go to Yeshua who is continually interceding for us to the Father¹² and is a mediator between us and God.¹³

Hope for the Weary and Heavy-Burdened

When Moses heard the people all weeping in their tents, he felt like the burden was too heavy for him to bear. Moses said that he would rather die than continue to carry such a heavy responsibility alone. He said, “**I am not able to bear all this people myself alone, because it is too heavy for me.**” (Numbers 11:14)

Basically, Moses said, “*So just kill me, God, Shoot me and put my out of my misery; I can't bear this any longer.*” (sloppy paraphrase). Have you ever felt like this – or am I the only one? Honestly, have you never said to the Lord in a moment of despair and utter frustration, “*Just strike me down, Lord, and let's get this over with. I just can't take it anymore!*”

There are times, too often than I care to admit, when I feel that bearing the entire burden of raising the family and providing for them as a single mother is just too much for me to bear. And isn't it annoying when some well-meaning Christian comes with a trite sounding word, like, “*Well sister, you know God will never give us more than we can bear*”

At times like this, I think, “*Well, why don't you try to carry this load then!?*” But God will not give someone grace for someone else's circumstance – only for our own situation does He promise His grace to be sufficient. If we just come to Yeshua, weary and heavy burdened just as we are, truly casting all our burdens upon Him, then He will give us rest. No burden is too heavy for the everlasting arms of the Lord. We can lay our every burden at the foot of the cross and ask for help.

Moses was not simply complaining (kvetching), but expressing legitimate despair. We can express our true feelings to God. God put the spirit of Moses on seventy elders to distribute the burden. Twice Moses was told to delegate. He tried to carry too much himself. Do we try to carry too much of the load? Could we delegate anything to others? Is there some way we could help to carry the load that others carry?

One morning, I woke up inspired. I took a whiteboard marker and began writing out as many small chores that I could think of with a corresponding wage – usually only a shekel each. Since my son Avi at the time used to wake up with the roosters and had nothing much to do, I let him go for it. And I was amazed at how many little things he was able to take care of for me – from watering the plants, to feeding the bunnies, to

¹² Hebrews 7:25

¹³ 1 Timothy 2:5

hosing down the dusty car. And he was happy to do it, too. (Child labor used to come cheap but alas this was years ago. Eventually they catch on...☺)

I thought, why didn't I think of this before? Later in the morning, I babysat my grandsons while my daughter, Courtney, went to an appointment. Just when I was running out of steam (and patience), she came to pick up her boys – and also took my two home with her to play, giving me a break as well. I think this is how it should be – but it is up to us to delegate in creative ways, and to ask for the help we need.

Slander and Leprosy

Aaron and Miriam spoke against Moses for marrying a Cushite (Ethiopian) wife; and this greatly displeased the Lord. He said, **“Were you not afraid to speak against my servant, Moses?”** (Numbers 12:8)

We should have a healthy fear of speaking against others – especially the men and women who are serving God. Perhaps some leaders may have exalted themselves, but most others have been placed in that position by divine appointment. Even if we don't agree with them, we can pray for them, and discuss issues with them, but when we speak against others behind their backs we are guilty of the sin of slander.

'Behold, Miriam was leprous.' (Numbers 12:10)

Leprosy was God's punishment for the sin of slander – speaking against another (Lashon Ha-ra in Hebrew) – literally translated, 'Bad tongue'. This is a serious sin of which I am guilty of at times myself. Even now as I write this, I am reminded of a time when I spoke against a person in spiritual leadership. I am checking my skin, and no, thankfully, I am not leprous, but I still repent and ask God to help me guard my tongue. James says that if we consider ourselves religious but don't control our tongue, then we're deceiving ourselves and our religion is useless. (James 1:26) Ouch!

“Do not speak evil of one another, brethren ...Who are you to judge another?” (James 4:11-12)



Miriam Shut Out from the Camp (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Moses did not defend himself against this slander. This was his meekness. He was called the most humble man on the face of the earth. He trusted God to vindicate him. 'Vengeance is mine', says the Lord. We can trust God to defend us even against the slander of others, instead of causing strife by attempting to verbally defend ourselves.

Haftarat B'ha'alotcha – Sing and Rejoice

“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, says the Lord.” (Zechariah 2:10)

Singing, dancing and rejoicing in the Lord is so important – God inhabits the praises of His people. Women play a special role as worshippers, like Miriam who led the women in singing, dancing and rejoicing with the tambourines as she crossed the Red Sea. It seems to me that we highly underestimate the power of singing, dancing, playing musical instruments and rejoicing in the Lord.



Miriam the Prophetess with tambourine

Perhaps it is when we least ‘feel like’ singing and rejoicing’ that we most need to get up and give the sacrifices of praise, giving thanks to His name. This ushers in the presence and power of God. He will ‘dwell in the midst of us’ as we praise Him with singing, dancing and rejoicing.

The Hebrew gives us insight into the power of praise. The worship leader in the Psalms is called the ‘menatzeach’ מנצִיחַ. This comes from the root ‘Netzach’ נצח, which means ‘forever’ or ‘eternity’ and is related to the word, ‘Nitzachon’ נצחון which means ‘victory’. When we praise and worship the Lord, we touch the Heavenly, eternal realm, and from His throne, God sends forth the victory. Halleluyah!



Messianic youth worship the Lord in dance at Shavuot picnic May 2015

In this Haftarah, God prophesied through Zechariah that many nations will become ‘His people’, not by replacing Israel, but by joining them. People of every race, tongue and tribe become full members of the commonwealth of Israel through the blood of Yeshua.

"Many nations will join themselves to the Lord and shall be My people, and I will dwell in the midst of them." (Zechariah 2:11)



The New Jerusalem - Christian Berdahl – Youtube.com

One day, we will all rejoice together in the New Jerusalem. God promises that He will again choose Jerusalem¹⁴. God is not finished with Israel or the Jews, as Replacement Theology claims; but Jerusalem is the eternal resting place of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The Accuser of the Brethren is Cast Down

Satan (whose name means ‘the adversary’) accused **Joshua** (Hebrew יהושוע) or **Yeshua** (Hebrew ישוע) **the High Priest** who was, according to the Bible, the first person chosen to be the **High Priest** for the reconstruction of the **Jewish Temple** after the return of the **Jews** from the **Babylonian Captivity**.¹⁵

While the name *Yeshua* is used in **Ezra–Nehemiah** for the High Priest, he is called *Joshua* son of Yehozadak in the books of Haggai and Zechariah. This encounter can be used to confirm the reality of Satan to the Jewish people, who do not usually believe in him as a real entity of darkness; but rather consider the devil simply an evil inclination within us.

¹⁴ Zechariah 2:12

¹⁵ See Zechariah 6:9-14 in the Bible

Satan always tries to hurl accusations against us, but we see here that the Lord rebuked Satan, saying, **'Is not this man a brand plucked out of the fire?'** (Zechariah 3:2)

So too, does Satan accuse us before God day and night, spewing lies - attempting to make us feel worthless and hopeless.¹⁶ One of his names is the 'Accuser of the Brethren',¹⁷ but God paid no heed to his accusations. God simply took off Joshua's filthy garments and clothed him with robes of righteousness. This symbolizes the way God forgives us and removes the filth of sin and clothes us with the righteousness of the Messiah, the perfect one who knew no sin.¹⁸

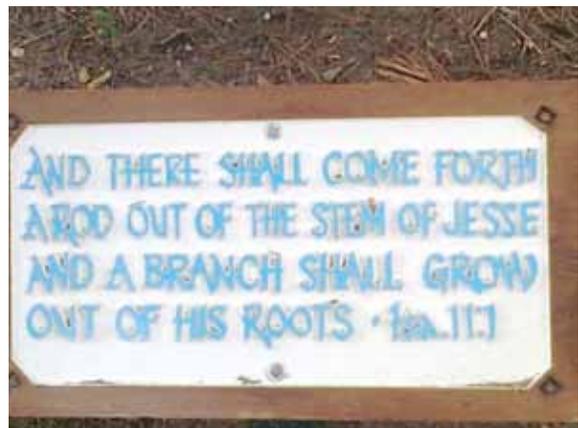
Halleluyah! The accuser of the brethren has been cast down through the Messiah:

"Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down." (Revelation 12:10)

A Shoot out of Jesse

'Behold I will bring forth My servant the Shoot'.
(Zechariah 3:8)

The Hebrew word used here is 'Tzemach' צמח which means a 'shoot or vegetation that grows out of something'. This symbolized the Messiah, a shoot out of Jesse. In Isaiah 11:1, the Hebrew word used is Netzer, which means branch, shoot, or sprout. In Hebrew, the word Netzer, means 'Christian'. This is an acknowledgement that in Hebrew, to be a Christian, is to be a follower of this branch, who is the Messiah, Yeshua.



A Sign at the Garden Tomb Jerusalem

Satan also accuses Israel of all its sin before Adonai, but God promises to cleanse us from all our iniquities and to heal our Land. **'And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.'** (Zechariah 3:9)

One glorious day this will be fulfilled and all the idolatry and uncleanness of this land will be completely removed from our midst by the Messiah. Like Joshua the High Priest, our filthy garments will be removed and we will be clothed in white garments. **The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.**" (Revelation 3:5).

¹⁶ (See article, [Accuser of the Brethren](http://www.voiceforisrael.net/articles), www.voiceforisrael.net/articles)

¹⁸ .2 Corinthians 5:21; Revelation 19:8

Vision of the Lampstand and Olive Trees

The connection between the parashah and haftarah is through Zechariah's vision of the golden lampstand with the seven lamps and the olive trees:

“Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep. And he said to me, “What do you see?”



souljournaler.blogspot.com

So I said, “I am looking, and there *is* a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the *stand* seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps.” (Zechariah 4:1-2)

Zechariah did not understand the meaning of this vision, so the angel explained it thus:

**‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’
Says the LORD of hosts.**

7 ‘Who are you, O great mountain?

Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain!

And he shall bring forth the capstone

With shouts of “Grace, grace to it!”” (Zechariah 4:6-7)

Just as we discussed in the beginning of our study, our deliverance from the formidable mountains in our lives will not come by our own abilities, or by our own strength or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord! Halleluyah!

The great mountains that loom before us as permanent, rock solid and unchangeable shall become a flat plain. He shall bring forth the **capstone** to shouts of ‘Grace, grace’. The Hebrew word for grace here is ‘Chen, Chen’... **חֵן חֵן**.

The capstone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone (Psalm 118:22). We know this stone is Yeshua Hamashiach. **“Yeshua is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.”** (Acts 4:11) Halleluyah!

B'ha'alotcha Study Questions

1. What does the menorah symbolize in Judaism?
2. What are some ways that we can make sure our light shines brightly?
3. What do the seven lampstands represent (in the book of Revelation)?
4. Why are there seven lamps? Why are they made of hammered gold?
5. Why did God give opportunity for a second Passover (Pesach Sheni)? Do you feel that you have missed an important opportunity and need a second chance? Share.
6. Do you feel that the Lord would have you move to stay under the cloud of His presence?
7. How may the shofar be used as an instrument of spiritual warfare?
8. Why is complaining (kvetching) such a serious sin in God's eyes? How can we refrain from complaining and instead have thankful hearts?
9. Is there any situation where you have a tendency to look back with longing or regret? Share and discuss. How can we maintain a forward focus and keep pressing on?
10. Has there ever been (or is there now) something that you really craved? Did (or does) the fact that you didn't (don't) have it keep you in chronic discontent? Discuss how we can learn to be more content. How do we balance contentment with seeking those things which we desire? Does contentment mean passivity or lack of ambition?
11. Do you ever feel like you can't bear the burden you have to carry? Share and discuss. What can you do to alleviate some of the pressure?
12. What happened to Miriam when she and Aaron spoke against Moses? What does this tell us about how God views slander and gossip?

About the Author:

Hannah Neshar grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

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