

## ***Introduction to Parsha #36: B'ha'alotcha<sup>1</sup>***

**READINGS:** *Torah B'ha'alotcha:* Numbers 8:1 - 12:16  
*Haftarah:* Zechariah 2:10\* – 4:7  
*B'rit Chadasha:* I Corinthians 10:1-13



*... the Cloud lifted.*  
[Numbers 10:11(b)]

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #7, *Kabatz [Ingathering]*

*Vayadaber Adonai el-Moshe l'emor* – And the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying ...  
*Daber el-Aharon v'amarta elav* – Speak to Aharon, and tell him ... ***b'ha'alotcha et-ha-nerot*** – in your ascending to the lamps .... Numbers 8:1-2a.

It is time to explore Torah's 36<sup>th</sup> parsha, *B'ha'alotcha*. This is the parsha of our *arising* – *shaking off the dust*, and *getting on with the Kingdom mission*.

### ***Is This the 'Great Nation' the Holy One Promised To Make of Avraham's Seed - or Should We Look For Another?***

We arrived at the shadow of Sinai and Horeb just a little short of a year ago. When we first pitched tents at this isolated location we were a huddled mass of traumatized former slaves with an ugly chip on our collective shoulder. But then ... well, then *Sinai happened!* We met, fell in love with, and pledged our covenantal troth to the God of our fathers. We marveled at His *Kevod* [KJV 'glory']. We warmed ourselves in the refining fire of His *Kedusha* [KJV 'holiness']. We embraced the healing, regenerative power of His *Kippurim* [KJV 'atonement']. He then began to teach us the secrets of the universe – things too wonderful for most men to even imagine! He taught us about His

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Covenant with our ancestors. He taught us about the important role He wants us to play in His Plan for to Redeem Mankind from the tyranny of *ra*, *shachat*, and *chamas* [see **Genesis 6:5 and 11**] and to Restore Creation to its original, intended Edenic state of beauty, fruitfulness, and *shalom* [See **Isaiah 66:10-24**]. He caused us to trust His Goodness, delight in His Will, and joyfully embrace His agenda of *kol tikkun*. He gave us the Torah to teach us to how He *thinks*; He had us build the brazen altar in the outer court of the *Mish'kan* [KJV 'Tabernacle'] to show us how He *forgives*. And He won our hearts with demonstration after demonstration of how He *loves*. Slowly but surely we began to detox from *raging nations slime* and recognize the difference between that which is *tahor* [KJV 'clean'; *i.e.* in a whole, wholesome, 'as intended' state] and that which is *tamei* [KJV 'unclean'; *i.e.* in a corrupted state associated with decay, destruction, and death], that which is *kadosh* [KJV 'holy'] and that which is *chol* [KJV 'profane'], and that which is *chochmah* (wisdom) and vain imagination/folly. We began to bond with Him – and as we did so, we found ourselves starting to look for ways to honor, love, and serve one another. Yes, let's acknowledge it - Sinai has been so, so good for us!

What was once a frightened mob of outcasts suffering from communal post-traumatic stress disorder - wounded, bleeding, and triggered to panic by every wind-blown leaf – has now been transformed into *a mighty army of hosts, majestic with banners!* Our tents are now in perfect alignment; our households are in perfect order; and our families are living in perfect harmony. The huddled mass of hunted animals we were when we arrived at Sinai is now the *Am Segulah* of the Creator of the Universe, Whose Manifest Presence dwells among us and Whose Glory rests upon us. The toxic throng of shattered egos, broken hearts, dysfunctional minds, stiff-necks, and fragmented souls to which Egyptian bondage and Pharaoh's genocidal campaigns of selective persecution had reduced us has been reborn as the diplomatic corps of the Kingdom of Heaven. We have been gloriously redeemed from bondage. We have been carried on eagles' wings to the Mountain of God. We have been engrafted afresh into the Avrahamic Covenant. We have courted by the Creator of the Universe with Passion and Style - invited to and shown around His Courts, dazzled by His Beauty, Majesty, and Magnificence, and healed by the Beautiful Words that pulse with life, health, and peace. We have been baptized in, absorbed, and begun to radiate the *Kedusha* energy that flows like a river of fire out of His Presence. We have been equipped with download after download of wisdom, understanding, and inspiration from His Brilliant Mind. We have been lovingly counseled and skillfully trained as both courtiers of His Palace and

Ambassadors of His Kingdom. We have been commissioned for strategic mission deployments. We have been 'Sinaitically infused' with amazing potential to bring life, health, and peace into the world.

So ... what now? In response to the mercies and grace we have been shown, will we joyfully arise and humbly shine? Will we walk worthy of the High Calling we have received? Will we bring honor to the Holy One Who has invested time, energy, and passion and committed the vast resources of Heaven to accomplish all these amazing things for and in us? Or will we, when we are confronted with real challenges in the desert – from harsh atmospheric conditions to hunger, thirst, exhaustion, and neighbor-negativity to existential threats from enemies bigger, stronger, and more experienced in battle than we are - sizzle, fizzle and pop, throw a hissy fit, and revert to cowering slave and sulking victim mentality? When things get tense and tough will we humbly follow our Bridegroom-King's lead and do things His Way, as He has been training us to do ... or will we sally forth in the pseudo-intellectual folly of what 'seems right in our own eyes', follow our deceptive heart into the cesspool of flesh reaction, and crash and burn in a great explosion of fleshly self-absorption? Will we walk in the Spirit of Holiness, Shalom, Joy, Meekness, and Self-Control as the faithful witnesses of our King's goodness, mercy, and power – or will we rant and rage, return insult for insult and evil for evil, whining about injustice and intolerance from others while blatantly engaging in both ourselves? Will we co-labor with the Holy One our God to effectuate His Grand Plan for the redemption of mankind as a species and for the restoration of Creation to its original, intended Edenic state of beauty, fruitfulness, and shalom? Or will we choose instead to slither around on our fat, fleshly bellies, hissing at everyone we see, coiling to strike anyone who gets close to us, and gleefully sinking serpentine fangs into, and spewing 'tree of knowledge' sourced poison at, every person, place, and situation we encounter? Is what we have real – or is it just religion?

We will find out the answers to these questions very, very soon ... and, of course, so will the world. Hardship will constitute the litmus test; tribulation will provide the microscope; and existential threat will supply the nitric/muriatic acid solution.

### ***Bugler, Blow your Horn!***

At about the mid-point of this parsha that the Cloud will lift off of Mount Sinai, and the Community of the newly reconstituted Community of the

Redeemed will transition from the sweet shade of the Chuppah into the *deep, dark, foreboding wilderness*. Off we will go ‘*to infinity and beyond*’<sup>2</sup>. Our spirits will be soaring. Our hearts will be overflowing. Our minds will be intoxicated with possibilities. And we will be – or at least appear to be – passionately in love with the Bridegroom-King. Will it last? Will it endure? Will it overcome the obstacles and transcend the challenges of the wilderness?

Ah, perhaps we should not be in such a hurry to leave. After all, first we really need to take care of some “unfinished business” with the Holy One. As Messiah taught us ‘*sufficient for every day is the evil thereof*’<sup>3</sup>. We do not yet even know how to *greet* this new day – much less how to *walk* in it. Hence, the *B’ha’alotcha* download will begin with a series of instructions on how we are to inaugurate each new interval of daylight.

In military camps a bugler signals the arrival of a new day by blowing “*Reveille*” or its equivalent. Not so in the camp of the Holy One’s people. In our camp each period of daylight is inaugurated with a *commemoration of the event described in Genesis 1:3*, when the voice of the Holy One said, creatively and prophetically, “*Yehi Ohr*” [*Light, Be!*]. Aharon is to begin each day by heading straight for the “holy place”, to the golden *menorah* where he is to *tend faithfully*, and *adjust as necessary*, and *redirect the light from*, the seven lamps.

### ***Lessons from the Name/Descriptive Title ‘B’ha’alotcha’***

The name of our parsha *ha-shavua – B’ha’alotcha* - is found in Numbers 8:2. In that verse, the Holy One begins a series of Divine Downloads that I call the ‘*Final Wilderness Preparation Discourse*’. He kicks off the deluge by

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<sup>2</sup> The nonsensical phrase ‘*To infinity and beyond!*’ is borrowed from the fictional character *Buzz Lightyear*, the animated toy ‘space ranger’ in the 1995 movie classic ‘*Toy story*’. In the Disney-Pixar story Buzz was a child’s toy that mistakenly believed that he was really a real space ranger on a mission to save the galaxy from the evil empire. As Buzz would take off on every action sequence he would strike a noble pose and pronounce ‘*To Infinity and Beyond!*’ This was bitter-sweetly reminiscent of the way the fictional comic book character Superman used to declare ‘*Up, up and away!*’ to begin each flight. The point of the authors was that Buzz was no Superman – but just a toy - and that whatever great mission he might think he was about to embark upon he was really going *nowhere* except where his new owner took him. Hence his cry was ‘*to infinity*’ [an unreachable destination], ‘*and beyond*’ [there is, by definition, nothing beyond infinity, which extends forever]. What does this have to do with us leaving Sinai, you ask? He who has ears to *sh’ma*, let him *sh’ma* what the *Ruach* is saying!

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 6:34. The NIV translates this verse *Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

instructing Moshe to tell Aharon: *B'ha'alotcha et ha-nerot ....* Unfortunately, *b'ha'alotcha* is difficult to translate. Hence we find that phrase sometimes translated as diversely as “when thou lightest ...” [KJV], ‘when you arrange ...’ [NKJV], and as ‘when you set up ...’ [NIV]. Look closely at the different English verbs the translators have chosen to try to orient the Western reader to the action in which the Holy One wanted Aharon to engage one is “light” [as in *kindling a fire*]; another says “arrange” [as in *organizing or systematizing*]; another says “set up” [as in *assembling component parts in such a way as to make something functional*]. Those verbs conjure up vastly different action images. Which of them – if any – really describes what Aharon is being prophetically called by the Holy One to do?

### ***Secrets of the Mish'kan and Its Priests***

But “hold on”, I hear some of you saying. “Who cares? Why do we need to know that Aharon to start and end his day several millennia ago? Ah Beloved – do you remember the stunning truths we learned back when we were first introduced to the ‘Aharonic priesthood’ concept<sup>4</sup>?

First we learned that the earthly *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle] was merely a *temporal replica* of a *spiritual reality far more grand* – a spiritual reality that exists eternally in the Heavenly Courts of the Holy One. We learned therefore that the *Mish'kan* actually belonged to two worlds - the world which is *seen with human eyes* and the world *which human eyes cannot see* - at least without Divine illumination.

We then learned that each and every detail of the *Mish'kan* the Holy One had our ancestors build on earth – every single furnishing, every single curtain, every single board, every single silver socket, every single utensil – was designed to serve as a *finite representation* of an *infinite spiritual reality*. And in connection with these truths we learned that all those the Holy One appointed to serve as ‘priests’ in the earthly replica of the Heavenly reality were likewise only *finite representatives* of something – or someOne - else, something or someOne much more real, much more holy, much more righteous, and much more enduring than Aharon or his sons could ever hope to be.

We learned, therefore, that the human being Torah calls *Aharon* is merely the

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<sup>4</sup> We were first introduced to the *Mish'kan* concept in general and the priesthood concept in particular in parsha *Tetzaveh*, which began with Exodus chapter 25.

tip of a vast spiritual iceberg. We learned that what we see him doing on earth is just the tip of an iceberg as well – the tip of an iceberg the primary substance of which is not on earth, in our realm of sight, but is instead in Heaven, in the realm of things unseen.

In that connection we then learned what I like to call the *law of offsetting spiritual/physical parallels*, which is that:

*Every action of man which the Holy One directs to be done in the earthly mish'kan, in the physical realm, corresponds to both [1] an eternal reality related to Messiah in the Heavenly Mish'kan, in the spiritual realm, and [2] a relation-building truth which each of us is to find a way to represent to the world in real time, in real life situations, in the course of our earthly walk with our Bridegroom-King.*

We should understand, therefore, that every time Aharon's name is mentioned in Torah we are supposed to adjust our spiritual eyes and look right through Aharon as one would look through a windowpane to the One Who He represents – *i.e.* to the risen, ascended, glorified, Ever-Interceding and Soon to Return in Triumphant procession Messiah.

If we understand that all actions of Aharon in relationship to the earthly *mish'kan*, its furnishings and its *avodah* [protocols of service/ministry], are intended to be prophetic in nature, pointing us to the role of Messiah as the great High Priest of Heaven, we must also understand that each and every instruction the Holy One tells Moshe to give to Aharon also directly impacts our role as earthly diplomats of the Kingdom of Heaven which Yeshua told us to proclaim was 'at hand'.

With these truths in mind the question of 'what exactly is Aharon being told to do' suddenly looks *a whole lot more important and relevant*, doesn't it? If we are serious about unlocking the secrets of the introductory phrase for this week's package of revelation and finding out what this instruction for Aharon – and the parsha of Torah which builds upon this instruction – have to do with us, however, it seems we are going to need to *go back to the Hebrew*.

The verb root of the phrase *b'ha'alotcha* is the Hebrew verb *alah* [*ayin, lamed, hey*, pronounced *aw-law'*], literally meaning:

1. to *ascend*;

2. to *go up high*;
3. to *mount up*; or
4. to *arise*<sup>5</sup>.

Those verbs all convey significantly different action-images than the English verbs the translators chose – ‘lighting’ ‘arranging’, and ‘setting up’ - conjure up, don’t they? So try this exercise: as you read Numbers 8:2, instead of picturing Aharon ‘lighting a lamp’ or arranging/organizing things in the earthly Tabernacle or setting up the Menorah so that it would cast light on earth, try to see him *ascending, going up, mounting up, and arising*. Try to see him actually *transcending the earthly realm, and both entering and performing a function in the Kingdom of Heaven*. Then look through Aharon as you would look through a windowpane, to Messiah – and see the *ultimate spiritual reality* that the Holy One wants you to see in the realm beyond ordinary human vision. Picture Aharon rising up and going – and taking your humanity with him - *to infinity and beyond*. What the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven wants you to see is the resurrected, ascendant Messiah *high and lifted up, making appearance on our behalf* at the Right Hand of the Throne of the Holy One. Can you *see Him*? Does your heart *yearn to be with Him*? Are you prepared to *spend your life doing on earth for others what you see Him doing in Heaven for you*?

If you are at least willing to consider that possibility please permit me to get a little more specific about what that might entail.

### ***Putting the Pieces Together***

I explained in the preceding section of this study that the verb at the root of the opening phrase of our parsha is *alah*, and what action-images that Hebrew verb is intended to convey to our minds. But the verb root is only one component part of the phrase we are studying. In the operative phrase ***b’ha’alotcha*** this verb root happens to be included in a linguistic ‘package’. It is preceded by both a preposition [‘b’] and a modifier [‘ha’], and followed by a suffix [*teicha*]. Contextually, it is then further followed by another Hebrew phrase - ***et-ha-nerot***.

What do these things mean? How are we to put all this together? Let’s start at the beginning. The *beit* [the Hebrew consonant making the “b” sound] at the front

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<sup>5</sup> See the first Biblical usage of the verb *alah* - Genesis 2:6 - which describes the issuing forth of the supernatural mist with which the Holy One watered the Garden before the Fall as follows:

... *there went up [alah] a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.*

of the phrase *b'ha'alotcha* is a preposition that corresponds to the English word “in”. The *hey* [the Hebrew consonant making the “h” sound] that comes next in the phrase is Hebrew’s version of “the” – the so-called ‘*definite article*’. The *teach* suffix combination [in Hebrew, *tav, chet*] makes the verb *second person possessive* - much like our English adjective *your*.

Putting all these together with the verb *alah*, you get something like “*in your ascending*”, or “*in your arising*”, or “*in your going up*”.

In the specific context of our parsha the introductory phrase *b'ha'alotcha* is followed by the objective phrase ‘*et ha-nerot*’. This tells us what Aharon’s [or prophetically, Messiah’s] *destination* in his arising/ascending/going up is to be. *Et* [in Hebrew, *alef/tav*] is a preposition meaning *at, upon, or unto*. *Ha*, as aforesaid, is akin to the English ‘definite article’ *the*.

As we begin this parsha – and launch off into the *Final Wilderness Preparation Discourse - Aharon* is not just arisen/ascended/gone up – he is arising/ascending/going at, upon, and/or unto something the Holy One calls *ha-nerot* - *i.e.* at, upon, and/or unto the feminine-plural form of the Hebrew noun *ner*, spelled *nun, yod, resh*. What are *nerot*? Whatever they are, they *shine*. They *glisten*. They *glow*. They *emanate light*. English translations equate them to *glistening lamps* on a lampstand or *burning candles* in a candelabrum. And Aharon ... or is that Messiah? ... is to be seen as having *ascended/arisen/gone up in the midst of them*.

We can easily understand the earthly picture – Aharon is *standing* in the Holy Place, just outside the Holy of Holies, *right in front of the seven lamps of the golden Menorah*. But the *law of offsetting physical/spiritual parallels* tells us that more is happening than meets the eye. Fast forward in your Bibles to Revelation 1:10-20. *Yochanan* [John], sometimes called *the Revelator*, is speaking of a vision he has had:

*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day,  
and I heard behind me a loud voice, like a shofar*

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*I turned to see the voice that spoke with me.  
I saw seven golden menorot. And having turned, among the menorot  
was one like a Son of Man, clothed with a robe reaching down to his feet,  
and with a golden sash around his chest.*

*His head and his hair were white as white wool, like snow.*

*His eyes were like a flame of fire.*

*His feet were like burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace.*

*His voice was like the voice of many waters. He had seven stars in his right hand.  
 Out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword.  
 His face was like the sun shining at its brightest.  
 When I saw him, I fell at his feet like a dead man.  
 He laid his right hand on me, saying,  
**Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last, and the Living one.  
 I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amein.  
 I have the keys of Death and of She'ol.  
 Write therefore the things that you have seen,  
 and the things that are, and the things which will happen hereafter;  
 the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand,  
 and the seven golden menorot. The seven stars are the angels of the seven assemblies.  
 The seven menorot are seven assemblies.***

Are you getting it? On earth in the earthly *Mish'kan* there was *one menorah* holding *seven lamps*. In Heaven however the reality after which the *menorah* and the *Mish'kan* were patterned is vastly greater, deeper, and more wonderful. Indeed, the Heavenly reality is exactly *seven-fold more wonderful* than the earthly replica.

### ***The One Who Walks Amidst the Lamps***

The subject of our opening phrase is Aharon, the Holy One's *kohen ha-gadol* [High Priest] on earth. The Holy One is speaking to Aharon about what he is to do each morning upon rising [or - on a prophetic level - at the beginning of each new interval of the Holy One's timetable]. The Holy One's specific instructions are as follows:

*In your arising, the lamps - the seven lamps -  
 make them give their light away from the face of the menorah.  
 [Numbers 8:2 – Rabbi's son paraphrase]*

The Hebraic picture is of Aharon's *first action* each day – before doing anything else, he is to cause the flames of, and the light from, the seven lamps of the *Menorah* that was in the “Holy Place”, to *arise* or *ascend*<sup>6</sup> “toward the front”.

In Leviticus 24:4 the Holy One made clear that Aharon was to be the one responsible for making light emanate from the Menorah:

***Then the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying:***  
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<sup>6</sup> As can be observed from today's meditation passage in Revelation 1 the prophetic “*Day of the Holy One*” will similarly be inaugurated in Heaven, in the Heavenly chamber in which Messiah ministers as the great High Priest after the order of *Melchi-tzadik*, with the inspection and adjustment of the “lamps”.

***He is to be in charge of [‘arak, meaning to arrange, or to put in order]  
the lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the Holy One continually.***

### ***A B’ha’alotcha Travelogue***

*B’ha’alotcha* promises a ton of *action, movement, and emotion*. For the first time since Exodus 18 – nineteen parshot back in the narrative - we are going to experience a change of earthly scenery. Mount Sinai – where we have spent the past eleven glorious months - will disappear in our rear-view mirror. The otherworldly spiritual serenity of that mountain will give way to the extremely challenging physical obstacle course the Holy One has us in the Wilderness.

#### ***Part I: A Few Last-Minute Details To Take Care of Before Departure***

The week’s readings will start innocently enough. The Holy One will give a series of instructions to Moshe designed to finally prepare us to break camp. He has, you see, determined that we have accomplished all that we are going to accomplish sitting in His shade under the *Sinaitic Chuppah*.

The first subject our Bridegroom-King will address will have to do with the care of the *menorah* by our nation’s esteemed High Priest. The Holy One will give very specific directions about how He wants the seven lamps of this great lamp stand arranged and tended at the start of every day.

Next the Holy One will continue his preparation for the Wilderness wandering season He has designed for us by instructing Moshe specifically as to *the kind of relationship He intends for there to be between the kohanim and the Levi’im on the one hand and between the other twelve tribes and the Levi’im on the other hand*. Unbeknownst to Moshe or the first-time reader, but fully known to the Holy One, you see, conflicts and misunderstandings arising out of this relationship are destined to become a major, major problem for the Camp of the Redeemed over the next few weeks. When it happens the Holy One wants Moshe, Aharon, and the reader prepared for what the Divine Plan for the relationship consists of, so they will recognize the depth of the problem – and its source – as soon as it surfaces.

The focus of the narrative will then turn to calendar issues, as the Holy One gives instructions that just as the initial journey out of Egypt took place in the aftermath of the observance of Passover, so is the journey away from Sinai predetermined to begin in the aftermath of the Divine Appointment of Passover.

After the discussions of Passover observance are reiterated and the Lamb's-blood sprinkling imagery is refreshed in the minds of the Redeemed, the final preparation for the camp to move will begin. The Holy One will instruct Moshe to fashion two *silver trumpets* that are to form the camp's new Divine 'communication system'.

## **II. *The Narrative of Our Grand Procession Away from Sinai***

The Radiant Cloud of the Divine Presence will then lift, the trumpets will blow, the Cloud will begin to move, and the newly reorganized people of the Holy One will follow in perfect Divine Order without delaying so much as to utter even a "*Goodbye Sinai, it's been good to know you!*"

The first march will continue for three straight days. The conditions will turn out to be very hot, dry, and arduous. Through the challenges of this environment the Holy One will test not only the purity of our hearts but our ability to stay focused on the Divine romance in the midst of heat, sandstorms, exhaustion, physical suffering, sleep deprivation, and emotional stress.

## **III. *The Unanticipated Challenges of the Desert of Paran Take Their Toll***

It will not take long for our unredeemed attitudes and appetites to start to surface and take control of our minds, hearts, and mouths. Grumbling, murmuring, and complaining will start to pour forth from the very same lips that just a few days ago were united in praise, worship, consecration ceremonies and covenant declarations. Welcome to the flesh/spirit rollercoaster!

In flesh-out moments worthy of a high-maintenance shrew instead of the pure and spotless bride we have been called and empowered to be we will complain about virtually everything. We will complain about the heat of the desert. We will *kvetch* about the manna the Divine Bridegroom gives us to eat. Moshe will throw a temper tantrum to match ours.

In response to all this dissatisfaction the Holy One will allow the establishment of a counsel of seventy elders who will eventually cause further complications with regard to the situation in the camp. The Holy One will then send us quail to supplement our diet of manna, but in our state of dissatisfaction and out-of-control physical appetites we will abuse the gift with a disgusting display of gluttony. As a result of this gluttonous binge a

horrible plague will break out in the camp, and death will touch our camp for the first time since the golden calf incident.

The toxic atmosphere of dissatisfaction will then strike even Miryam and Aharon, who will judge and speak much evil concerning Moshe. A plague of Divine Judgment in the form of *tzara'at* [spiritually sources eruptions manifesting in a person's skin] will then break out on Miryam.

Moshe will then selflessly intercede for his sister, though she has spoken evil of him, and after an appropriate season of separation from the camp, she will be healed. But do not worry Beloved; the Holy One knew all this ugly junk was in us before He ever betrothed us to Him and claimed us as His covenant people. He is not by any means repulsed. His love for us is not by any means diminished. Indeed He knows that the only way to cleanse us of these hidden, residual un-Bridelike characteristics is to bring them to the surface, let us see them for what they are, and let His love and discipline combine to start melting them away.

### ***A Quick Look at This Week's Haftarah*** **Zechariah 2:10 – 4:7**

This week we will in accordance with ancient tradition supplement the readings from parsha *B'ha'alotcha* with related readings from the scroll of the post-exilic prophet *Zechariah* [a/k/a 'Zechariah']. Zechariah was from a family of *kohanim* [priests] but was born during the Babylonian captivity. He chose to be part of the first wave of the relative few who chose to return to *Eretz Yisrael* rather than remain in Babylon and Persia after the Decree of Cyrus allowed all Jews to return to the Land. It was this first wave of returnees that re-established the altar of the Holy One at Jerusalem and laid the foundation for the Second Temple which was later built under the direction of Zerubbabel. Among Zechariah's contemporaries were a prophet named *Haggai*, a High Priest named *Y'hoshua* [Joshua], and a ruler from the tribe of Y'hudah named *Zerubbabel*.

Zechariah's prophecies were often apocalyptic in nature. In the passages we will read this week, Zechariah will describe the fourth and fifth of the eight apocalyptic visions which make up the scroll that bears his name. In these visions, Zechariah will describe both the prophetic plan for the cleansing of the priesthood and the Divine Plan for bringing forth light from the Menorah through the Work of the *Ruach*, or Spirit of the Holy One.

## *The Apostolic Scriptures for the Week*

### **I Corinthians 10:1-13**

Shaul of Tarsus wants the primarily Gentile talmidim in the Greek city of Corinth to understand that reading, studying and intimately familiarizing themselves with the experiences of B'nei Yisrael in the Wilderness is an essential prerequisite to understanding what it is that the Holy One seeks from those in covenant with Him. He knows that very obstacle, hindrance, offense, and stressor which the Redeemed Community had to deal with in the Wilderness season that begins with *B'ha'alotcha* represents a prototype of an obstacle, hindrance, offense, and/or stressor that everyone ever engrafted into the Covenant will encounter in life. Shaul knows that the same fears, attitudes, fleshly drives, and inclinations to depart from Covenant that manifested in the lives of *B'nei Yisrael* during the Wilderness years also abides in the heart of every man that threaten to interfere with our spiritual development and detour us from our great calling, thwart our world-reshaping mission, and hijack our glorious destiny. As he puts it:

*These things became our examples,  
to the intent that we should not lust after ra things as they lusted,  
and not become idolaters as some of them did,  
... nor commit fornication as some of them did,  
... nor test/challenge Messiah, as some of them ...,  
... nor complain, as some of them complained.  
No all these things happened to them as examples.  
And they have been written for our admonition,  
upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*

Shaul will thus reveal the 'big five' temptations every man must face. He knows that every human being, in his/her present state, has a natural tendency toward self-will, self-determination, fear of man, and living independent from and out of communication with His Creator. He knows that every man, woman, and child is, at some point, going to be tempted by the adversary to leave the Covenant lifestyle – and go AWOL from the great Kingdom Mission – in five primary ways:

1. *THE PATHWAY OF LUST* – *i.e.* looking longingly at, wanting for one's selfish purposes, lusting after, and thus worshipping material things, foods, substances, experiences, sentiments, statuses, ideologies, causes, sensual pleasures, people and institutions that are steeped in and/or obsessed by *ra*;
2. *THE PATHWAY OF IDOLATRY* – *i.e.* being attracted to, and serving, the social, cultural, economic, and ideological, as well as religious,

- ‘gods’ of the very people to which we are called to model the Holy One’s unique form of righteousness, goodness, beauty, and wisdom;
3. *THE PATHWAY OF FORNICATION* – *i.e.* letting romantic attraction and/or sexual curiosity and get out of control like the pagans around us do, valuing that curiosity and attraction more than we value our love for the Holy One and His Ways, and thus giving that curiosity and appetite outlets and expressions that are self-obsessed and toxic; and
  4. *THE PATHWAY OF TESTING/DISTRUSTING/BELITTLING THE HOLY ONE* – *i.e.* getting so enamored with our own or our fellow man’s thoughts, passions, logic, reasoning, belief systems, worldview, opinions, causes, and offenses that we begin to think ourselves more intelligent, more enlightened, more relevant, more important, and ultimately more powerful than the Holy One, to the extent that we willfully do the exact opposite of what He said to do;
  5. *THE PATHWAY OF NEGATIVITY* – *i.e.* letting the abundant joy, the *shalom*, and hope we have through our relationship with the Holy One leave our hearts, minds, and mouths to the extent that our natural subjects of thought, motivation, speech and conduct – *i.e.* adoration, thanksgiving, praise, blessing, and words of encouragement - get displaced by negativity, especially murmuring, complaining, accusing, blaming, cursing, fearmongering, fomenting rebellion, fretting over those we label as evil-doers, and pontificating about whatever we perceive as ‘injustice’.

Oh, Beloved – these serpentine dalliances are the five primary darkness generators of the world. Man, woman, and child - we will encounter them all. The Holy One does not have us here on earth to fear them or to judge them those poor souls among us who fall victim to them. What He wants us to be able to do is discern them, then resist them, then overcome them, and then go forth in joy and shalom to inspire, encourage, and train others to do the same.

*May you stand firm in the midst of testing this week and at all times, Beloved,  
And may you walk worthy of the glorious calling  
into which you are being inexorably drawn.*

***The Rabbi’s son***

***Amidah Prayer Focus for the Week***

*The 7<sup>th</sup> Petition – Kabatz [Ingathering]*

***T'kah b'shofar g'dol l'charuteinu***

*Sound the great shofar for our deliverance*

***v'sah nes l'kabetz galuteinu***

*Make a miracle, and ingather us from our lands of exile*

***v'kabetzeinu yachad m'arba kn'fot ha-aretz***

*ingather us by your Hand from the four corners of the earth*

***Baruch Atah Adonai,***

*Blessed are You, O Holy One,*

***m'kabetz ni'dchai amo Yisrael***

*Who gathers the outcasts of His People Israel*