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In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag  
Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by Menachem Leibtag  
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**For PARSHAT BHA'ALOTCHA - (shiur #2)  
"CHALSHA DA'ATO SHEL AHARON"**

Why was Aharon depressed?

The first Rashi in this week's Parsha deals with this question as he explains the juxtaposition between the first topic in Parshat Bha'alotcha - for Aharon to light the Menorah (8:1-5), and the last topic in Parshat Naso - the twelve day dedication ceremony of the Mizbayach (7:1-88):

"Why is the parsha of the Menorah juxtaposed to 'chanukat ha'nssiim' (the special offering brought by the princes of each tribe)? - When Aharon saw the daily dedication offering by the 'nssiim', he became DEPRESSED, because neither he, nor his shevet, took part in this ceremony. - God assured Aharon saying: Do not worry, YOUR PORTION IS GREATER than theirs, for you are to light and attend to the MENORAH every morning and evening."

**IS AHARON REALLY 'LEFT OUT'?**

Ramban immediately questions the basic assumption of this Midrash (as quoted by Rashi):

"Could it be that Aharon is depressed because he felt 'left out'? After all, each "nasi" enjoyed only ONE day of special attention, while Aharon was at the center of attention during each of those TWELVE DAYS! Did he not offer all of the korbanot on each of those days, as well as the ktoret and korban tamid? Furthermore, during the miluim ceremony (see Vayikra 8:1-36) that preceded that dedication, he and his children enjoyed seven days of 'exclusive attention'. For what possible reason could Aharon have felt 'left out'?

In this commentary, Ramban is unable to find a satisfying explanation of this Midrash according to "pshat". Instead, he suggests that the intention of the Midrash is not to explain the psukim, but rather to show a biblical source for the Hasmonean revolt:

"Even though Aharon did not participate in the dedication of the mizbayach of the Mishkan, in the merit of his descendants - the Hasmoneans - the mizbayach of the Second Temple will be dedicated. Furthermore, in commemoration of that event, a Menorah will be lit in every home, even after the destruction of the Temple "  
(see Ramban 8:1).

One could suggest an alternative explanation of the Midrash, without the need of limiting its significance to the events of the Hasmonean revolt.

**COALITION POLITICS**

The opening statement of the Midrash - "chalsha da'ato shel Aharon" (Aharon became depressed) - requires explanation. [Note that Ramban had raised this question, but did not answer it directly.]

Considering that Aharon is indeed at the center of attention and very busy during each day of the dedication ceremony, why should he have become depressed?

To understand Aharon's reaction (according to the Midrash) we must consider the political realities of his predicament. Bnei Yisrael are about to leave Har Sinai and begin their journey to conquer and inherit the Land of Israel. Although Aharon is indeed a very key figure during Bnei Yisrael's short stay in the desert, he is apprehensive about what will most probably take place once Bnei Yisrael leave Har Sinai. The focus of national attention will shift to the excitement of military initiatives and political enterprise. Har Sinai, and maybe even the Mishkan, will soon be 'long forgotten'.

Once the conquest of Eretz Canaan would begin, it will be the twelve "nssiim" (the tribal leaders) who will hold the highest positions of national leadership. They will establish economic policy; they will make treaties with foreign dignitaries; they will

make the speeches at national gatherings; they will lead the nation in war. [In modern phraseology, they will become the Ministers of Defence and the Treasury; Secretaries of State and Foreign Affairs.]

Thus, it is quite understandable why Aharon becomes depressed. When he sees the attention that the twelve "nssiim" receive, he realizes the insignificance of his position within the emerging national leadership. What ministry post will he receive? In his own eyes, he may have begun to view his job as merely the "shamash" (a beadle/ attendant) taking care of the Mishkan. Indeed, a very technical job at best.

Will he have any influence lasting influence on the nation? At best, he may possibly be appointed "sar ha'datot" - the Minister of Religion. Within a short time, Aharon fears, he will be distanced from national leadership.

**AN IMPORTANT CABINET POST**

Thus far, we have suggested a reason for Aharon's depression (according to the Midrash). What is the significance of God's consolation -that he will light the Menorah?

Although the Midrash is well aware of Aharon's numerous responsibilities in the Mishkan, it chooses specifically the Menorah to symbolize an additional aspect of his national duties, i.e. teaching God's laws to the people. This double purpose is mentioned in the blessing to Shevet Levi in Parshat vZot ha'bracha:

"They shall TEACH Your laws to Yaakov, and your instructions to Yisrael, they shall offer Your incense... and offer the 'olah' ("kalil") on Your mizbayach..."  
(Devarim 33:10)

Once Bnei Yisrael will enter the land, teaching the laws of the Torah will become the PRIMARY duty of the Kohanim and Leviim. Since their work is divided into 24 week shifts, the average kohen or levi would find himself working in the Mishkan only two weeks a year. Therefore, most of their time would be spent teaching and judging the people (see Devarim 17:8-10), and for this reason - their cities are scattered throughout the twelve tribes (see Bamidbar 35:1-8 & Yehoshua 21:1-40).

Thus, the Menorah may symbolize specifically this duty of the Kohanim - "chinuch", teaching. If the purpose of the Menorah is to spread light, then the purpose of the kohanim is to spread Torah to the entire nation. This understanding can explain why Aharon is consoled when told that it is his job to light the Menorah.

If we continue with our parallel to the realm of national politics, one could explain that Aharon and his "shevet" are consoled - for they are given a responsibility similar to the control the Ministry of Education and Justice (in addition to the Ministry of Religion) - a cabinet position no less important than any other!

shabbat shalom,  
menachem

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**FOR FURTHER IYUN -**

1. According to pshat, one could suggest a simple reason for the juxtaposition of these two parshiot?

Notice that the final psukim of perek 7, which summarize the korbanot brought by the nssiim, are actually referring to the first day of the dedication ceremony when all the nssiim brought their korbanot together, at the same time (read 7:10-11 carefully!). Furthermore, 7:89 - the dibur to Moshe - also takes place on the first day.

Therefore, Bha'alotcha opens in the 'afternoon' of the first day of the dedication of the Mishkan. The only avodah left, which did not begin in the morning, is the lighting of the Menorah, for it is lit "m'erev ad boker" - from evening to morning! This may explain why this mitzvah is included at this time.

2. Compare this juxtaposition between the dibur to Moshe (7:89), and his relationship to Aharon (8:1-5) and the Nsiim (7:1-88) to the psukim which describe Moshe's descent from Har Sinai according to Shmot 34:29-32! Relate this to the connection between Har Sinai and the function of the Mishkan!