



## **Baha'alotcha"**

*Bamidbar* (Numbers) 8:1-12:16

This week's Torah reading is *Parshat Baha'alotcha*, the third of the *Parshiyot* in the Book of *Bamidbar* (Numbers). The *Parshah* begins with a description of the Menorah, the seven branch candelabrum which was such an important feature of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle). The Menorah is actually the oldest symbol of the Jewish people, and the one most frequently found in ancient sources. While in our time the Star of David is perhaps the most common of Jewish symbols, the Menorah predates it by at least 2,500 years.

The institution of the *Pesach Sheni* is also an important feature of this week's reading. After the observance of the second Passover after the exodus from Egypt, some men approached Moses saying that because they recently had contact with a dead body and were therefore ritually unfit, they were unable to offer the Passover sacrifice in its appointed time. They felt unfairly excluded from participating in this great *Mitzvah*. In one of several instances in the Bible when Moses was unsure about the law, he appeals to G-d for help in rendering a decision. The solution was that the *Pesach Sheni*, the second Passover, would be held one month later for those unable to participate in the Passover sacrifice in its regular time.

The final section of the *Parshah* deals with Miriam and Aaron speaking against Moses. For her public criticism of Moses, Miriam is punished with leprosy. Moses prays to G-d on behalf of his sister and after seven days outside the camp she is allowed to return. It is in light of this incident that our Rabbis taught about the sin of the *Lashon Harah* (evil speech) and warned of the dire consequences for both the individual and the community if it is left unpunished.



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