

Parshat Behaalotcha: Aaron and the honor of lighting the Menorah

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Last week we read on Parshat Naso about the offerings that were brought by the heads of the tribes of Israel for the inauguration of the Tabernacle. The tribe of Levy, however, because they are not counted as a regular tribe due to their special role in the ritual, were not part of that offering.

The Midrash tells that because of that reason Aaron became upset as he was “left out” and could not participate in the inauguration. But God comforted him saying: “Your reward will be greater than the tribes, because you will have the honor of preparing the lights of the Menorah”. That is the reason why our Parsha Behaalotcha begins with God commanding Aaron to take care of the lights at the Sanctuary.

But we should ask: What is the logic behind the way God comforted Moses? Why preparing the Menorah is more important than offering sacrifices to God? The rabbis answer explaining that while sacrifices were brought only in the times of the Temple, the lighting of the Menorah will be a permanent Mitzvah through time. But, is that really the truth!? Do we still have a Menorah like the one in the Temple to be lit?

Ramban (Rabi Moshe Ben Nachman, Spain 1194 – 1270) answers: “The Menorah will be eternal because it will live in the home of every Jew, thanks to the lights of Hanukkah”. The victory of the Hashmonayim (Or Maccabim) over the Greeks will be the reward for Aaron and the tribe of Levy.

The Meloh Haomer (Rabi Aryeh Leib Zunz, Prague – Poland, 1768 – 1833) continues the explanation of the Ramban and teaches us a beautiful lesson: When someone important as Aaron achieves a high position and honor, probably he will become arrogant. But Aaron, on the contrary, was like the Menorah: As the Menorah was unaware about how important it was in comparison with other rituals, the same way Aaron was not thinking about how much honor he will deserve because of his position.

Shabbat Shalom!

Rabbi Claudio