

PARASHAT B'HA'ALATKHA

(WHEN YOU SET UP)

NUMBERS 8:1-12:16

ETZ CHAYEEM HOO (HE IS A TREE OF LIFE)

Yeshua is a tree of life to those who take hold of Him, and those who support Him are praiseworthy. His ways are ways of pleasantness and all of His paths are shalom. Bring us back YHVH to You, and we shall come, renew our days as of old.

As we begin to study the Torah let us never forget that YESHUA THE MESSIAH is the Living Torah, the Torah-Word of Elohim made flesh. He is the way, the truth and the life — the Living Manna sent from heaven. Without Him living in our lives through the indwelling Presence of his Set-Apart/Kadosh Spirit (Who leads us into all truth and revelation) the Written Torah can become the dead letter of the law!

Haftorah Reading:

Zechariah 2:10 [14]-4:7

B'rit Chadashah:

On the consecration of the apostles for service: **Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:15**

On Yeshua our Great High Priest: **Hebrews 4:14-5:10; 7:1-28; 9:23-25**

On following Yeshua, our spiritual pillar of fire: **1 Corinthians 11:1; Revelation 14:4; Philippians 2:14**

On murmuring: 1 Corinthians 10:10

Outline of This Week's Parashah (Torah Portion):

- 8:1 The Menorah
- 8:5 Consecration of the Levites for Service
- 8:23 Apprenticeship of Levites At Age 25 and Service at Age 30
- 9:1 The Israelites Keep Pesach (Passover) in the Wilderness
- 9:6 Pesach Sheni/The Second Passover for Those Unable to Keep the First Passover
- 9:15 The Pillar of Fire by Night and a Cloud By Day: How YHVH Led His People Through the Wilderness
- 10:1 The Two Silver Trumpets; the Various Blasts and Their Meanings; When to Sound the Trumpets
- 10:11 The Israelites Leave Sinai Where They Had Camped for Nearly 15 Months; The Order of Breaking Camp
- 10:29 Moses Invites Jethro to Join the Israelites
- 10:33 Israel's First Journey With the Ark Leading the Way
- 11:1 The People Complain; Dissatisfaction With the Manna and Moses' Despair
- 11:16 The 70 Elders, Beginning of the Sanhedrin
- 11:18 YHVH Responds to the People's Desire for Meat
- 11:24 The Spirit of Prophecy Falls on the 70 Elders
- 11:30 YHVH Answers the People's Desire for Meat and Sends Quail
- 12:1 Miriam and Aaron Murmur Against Moses; Miriam Is Afflicted With Tzaraas/A Skin Disease
- 12:14 Miriam Is Healed and Then Is Quarantined

Study Questions for This Week's Midrash (Torah Discussion):

1 8:2, The phrase *toward the face of the Menorah* is an interesting one. The rabbis teach that the three wicks on the right and the three on the left were all directed toward the Menorah's central stem, thus concentrating light toward the center. The Menorah symbolized that YHVH is the Source of all light (*ArtScroll Stone Edition Chumash*, p. 775). What are the connotations of this for a believer in Yeshua? How did Yeshua describe himself? (See John 8:12; 9:5.) What did he mean when he said that "I am the vine and you are the branches?" (John 15:5) What does this mean and how is this pointing to a type of human menorah? Relate this to the seven Messianic assemblies of Revelation 2 and 3 being likened to menorahs (Rev 1:13,20). Is Yeshua the center of all that we do? Do we place all of our focus on him? Can we say, as the Apostle Paul did, that "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28)? Does the power of his resurrected life and anointing flow through you even as oil was in the Menorah and sap flows through a tree to its branches?

We Are That Menorah

Scripture plainly states that Yeshua and his body of followers is likened to a tree of which the seven-branched Menorah that adorned the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) in the wilderness as well as the sanctuary of Solomon's Temple is a picture. Furthermore, remember what Yeshua said in John 15:5? "I am the vine and you are the branches ..." This is a perfect picture of the Menorah, which has a central trunk with six (the number representing man) branches growing out of the trunk. Remember what Yeshua said in Matthew 5:14–15, that his followers were to be lights upon a lampstand on a hill for all the world to see—a clear allusion in the mind of anyone in Yeshua's audience to the Temple's Menorah (upon the Temple Mount—a light on a hill).

Additionally, when a redeemed believer in and follower of Yeshua is in a sacred state of worshipping his Master and Savior, he will often lift his arms heavenward. Not only is this the universal sign of surrender (in this case to one's Heavenly Master), but when we lift our hands our bodies are actually forming a human menorah. By doing this, in worship we are acting out what we are—a lampstand to the world radiating forth the good news of the truth and love of Yeshua.

In fact, Scripture shows us that the Menorah, and not the cross, is the symbol of Yeshua's spiritual body of believers. We see this in Revelation 1:12, 20 and 2:1 where the seven congregations are symbolized as a seven-branched Menorah! The Menorah here is the symbol of the sacred assembly of believers.

Though the cross is representative of the redemptive work Yeshua accomplished on our behalf, it is *not* the symbol of the body of believers, commonly called the "church," but the Menorah is! Furthermore, in Jewish thought, the Menorah is analogous to an olive tree (the ancient Temple Menorah was constructed of hollow tubes of solid gold filled with olive oil that burned when lit), to which the Apostle Paul makes reference in Romans 11, as representing the Tree of Life (which ultimately represents Yeshua) into which all must be grafted if they are to be part the spiritual body of Yeshua and have his eternal life.

2 9:2, *In its appointed time [season]/moed*. The word *moed* (*Strong's* H4150; *TWOT* 878b) primarily means "an appointment, a fixed time or season, a festival, an assembly, the congregation, the place of meeting." The question that is begged in these definitions is this: Who is making the appointment? Who is calling the assembly together? Is there any man (or group of men) that has the authority and power to call all believers together at a fixed and seasonal time for an appointment, assembly or festival? Torah is clear that YHVH is the one who determines these times. In this passage, the subject is Passover, which is but one of seven annual *appointed times* or *moedim* that he commanded Israel to keep. Who is the Author of these days—the one who made the appointment for all Israel to meet with him at certain times and seasons? Now who is the author of Christmas, Easter, and the myriad other man-made church festivals? Who are you going to obey? Whose appointments are you going to keep?

3 9:8, *Stand and I will hear*. Rashi, a noted Rabbinic Jewish biblical commentator, states that Moses was like a student who was assured of hearing a response from the mouth of his teacher whenever he asked. Blessed is the man who is assured of hearing from the Divine Presence whenever he asks! The word *stand* means to "stand still, stay, remain, set, endure, continue." How often do we ask of our Heavenly Father

and hear nothing immediately and so lose patience and faith? Yeshua said to keep asking, knocking and seeking (Matt 7:7). Do you hear YHVH's voice? If not, why not? Yeshua said that his sheep hear/know his voice and that he calls them by name (John 10:3–4,27).

4 **9:13**, The term *cut off* (also meaning “expelled or killed”) is used in the Torah about 34 times and is usually referring to Israelites being cut off (expelled) from the camp of Israel for rebellion and disobedience against YHVH's commands. Is this a spiritual principle that applies to us today with regard to the congregation of the believers? Should leaders expel someone from the congregation for disobedience and rebellion against YHVH's commandments? (See Rom 16:17; Tit 3:10; 2Thess 3:6; 2Tim 3:5; 1Cor 5:5.)

5 **9:15–23**, The cloud covered the sanctuary by day and a pillar of fire covered it by night. How does this relate to us and to our spiritual walk? Who is YHVH's spiritual sanctuary now? (1Cor 3:16; 6:19) Who is the pillar of fire that gave light in the darkness of the night to the Israelites and that now gives us light? (John 1:4–9; 8:12 cp. Ps 119:105 and John 1:1–3) Where does the fire of YHVH abide now? Over us or in us? (Acts 2:1–4) To be filled with the Spirit of Elohim means being filled with Yeshua's Spirit, which guides us in the ways of YHVH from the inside of us (John 16:13).

6 **9:22–23**, *Abode ... rested ... journeyed*. How do these concepts relate to our spiritual walk? How do we know when to rest and abide, and when to journey? How does YHVH show us his will for our lives? Matthew Henry in his commentary on this verse states, “Thus we are taught to see [Elohim] always near us, both night and day. As long as the cloud rested on the Tabernacle, so long as they continued in the same place. There is no time lost, while we are waiting [Elohim's] time. When the cloud was taken up, they removed, however comfortably they were encamped. We are kept at uncertainty concerning the time of our putting off the earthly house of this tabernacle, that we may be always ready to remove at the command of [YHVH]. It is very safe and pleasant going when we see [Elohim] before us, and resting where he appoints us to rest. The leading of this cloud is spoken of as signifying the guidance of the blessed Spirit.” (Read Pss 37: 3–7, 23–24; 73:24; Prov 3:6; Rom 8:14.) Are we ready to lay our lives down, die to self, and to follow YHVH's perfect will for our lives no matter how much it may stretch our faith?

Some Additional Insights on the Pillar of Fire That Guided the Israelites

In Exodus 13:21 we read,

And YHVH went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night.

Then in Exodus 14:19 it is written,

And the Angel of Elohim, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them.

Who is this “Angel” of Elohim (in other places he is called “the Angel of YHVH”)? *Angel* is an unfortunate translation. The Hebrew word for *angel* is *malak*/ מַלְאָךְ and simply means “a heavenly or a human messenger.” Prophetically this word can refer to human messengers such as the one coming in the spirit of Elijah prior to Messiah's coming, as well as to the Messiah himself (“Messenger/*Malak* of the covenant” in Mal 3:1). In Genesis 32:22–30, Jacob wrestles with a man Scripture identifies as the *Malak* of YHVH (Hos 12:3–5) and whom Jacob called Elohim (Exod 32:30). This same Individual redeemed Jacob (Gen 48:16) and is identified with the *Malak of Elohim ... the Elohim of Bethel* (31:11 and 13) and appeared to Moses at the burning bush (Exod 3:2). Now we find this same figure leading Israel in the wilderness. Again who is he? Stephen in Acts 7:37–39 identifies the Messiah (i.e. “that Prophet” Moses mentioned in Deut 18:15) with the “Angel” or Heavenly Messenger which spoke to the Children of Israel from Mount Sinai and who gave them the “living oracles,” who the Israelites later rejected for pagan gods. Paul elsewhere said of that same Personage that the Israelites did “all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Messiah” (1Cor 10:4).

Of that pillar of fire that led them we see that it gave them light. Light, in Scripture, is synonymous with Torah (see *YHVH's Instructions in Righteousness, A Messianic Believer's Introduction to the Torah* at <http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/pdfs/torahprimer.pdf>). We have seen that Yeshua the Messiah is the Light of

the World—the Word of Elohim in living form (personified).

In Nehemiah 9:12 and 19 we read:

Moreover you led them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them *light in the way wherein they should go*.... Yet you in your manifold mercies forsook them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, *to lead them in the way*; neither the pillar of fire by night, *to show them light, and the way wherein they should go*. (emphasis added)

Light in Scripture is a metaphor for the Torah while the term *the way* (Hebrew, *derek/ דרך*) means “the way of Torah righteousness.” Scripture uses the term *way(s)/derek* as a reference to the Torah in the following passages (and many more, as well):

Therefore you shall keep the commandments of YHVH your Elohim, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. (Deut 8:6)

And now, Israel, what does YHVH thy Elohim require of you, but to fear YHVH your Elohim, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve YHVH your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deut 10:12)

For if you shall diligently keep all these [Torah] commandments which I command you, to do them, to love YHVH your Elohim, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him. (Deut 11:22)

And a curse, if you will not obey the [Torah] commandments of YHVH your Elohim, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which you have not known. (Deut 11:28)

I have chosen the way of [Torah] truth; your judgments have I laid before me. (Ps 119:30)

I will run the way of your [Torah] commandments, when you shall enlarge my heart. (Ps 119:32)

Teach me, YHVH, the way of your statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. (Ps 119:33)

The Messenger of Elohim from within the pillar of fire not only directed the Israelites in the way (Exod 13:21; Deut 1:33); they should go, but the Messenger spoke to Moses from within the pillar, as well:

And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the Tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the Tabernacle, and YHVH talked with Moses. And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the Tabernacle door, and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door. And YHVH spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaks unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp, but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the Tabernacle. (Exod 33:9–11)

And YHVH descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of YHVH. (Exod 34:5)

And YHVH came down in a cloud, and spoke unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders, and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. (Num 11:25)

And YHVH appeared in the Tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud, and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the Tabernacle. And YHVH said unto Moses ... (Deut 31:15–16a)

7 10:1, *Two trumpets of silver*. What is the significance of the two silver trumpets? They were used to gather the assembly (verse 2), to move the camp (verse 5), to prepare the people for war (verse 9), and to celebrate YHVH's feasts (verse 10). Why were there two trumpets with which to call the Children of Israel to assembly? The procedure for using trumpets as a procedure to summons or signal the nation of Israel was an eternal decree (verse 8, also see *ArtScroll Stone Edition Chumash*, p. 783).

The rabbis teach that the sounding of these silver trumpets is directly linked to *Yom Teruah* (the Day of the Awakening Blast) in the fall, which is symbolic of the return of Yeshua and the regathering of his people Israel.

So what do these two silver trumpets represent prophetically? Who is being called? Are those trumpets being sounded now in a spiritual sense and who is responding to the call?

The Two Silver Trumpets and the Two Houses of Israel

As to the significance of the two silver trumpets, Batya Wootten suggests, in her book, *Israel's Feasts and Their Fullness*, that the trumpets spiritually symbolize voices (Rev 1:10; Isa 58:1). She goes on to note that historically there have been two people groups on earth who have been testifying about the goodness of the Elohim of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These are the Christians and the Jews—both of whom worship the same Elohim as revealed in the Scriptures. Israel was called to be YHVH's witnesses on earth (Isa 43:10). YHVH then divided the twelve tribes of Israel into two nations or houses, They were the House of Judah and the House of Ephraim who would be later represented by the Jews and the Christians, respectively. According to Torah, truth must be confirmed in the mouth of two or more witnesses before it can be believed (Num 35:30; Deut 17:6; 19:15; John 8:17; 2 Cor 13:1). Wootten says that these “two witnesses” have *not* been sounding their voices in unison, but instead have been fighting and denying one another. Yet the Apostle Paul states that there is to be one new man in Messiah Yeshua (Eph 2:15) not two men—a Jewish and a Christian man. These two witnesses have to come together before Yeshua can return to this earth to establish his eternal kingdom here (Acts 1:6–8 cp. Acts 3:21). Wootten notes that the two silver trumpets were hammered out of one piece of silver (Num 10:2). In the Bible, silver symbolizes refinement and redemption. Hammered trumpets tell of the Father molding his people through affliction (Jer 9:7; Dan 11:35; Zec 13:9; Hos 1:10; Mal 3:3, Ibid. pp. 219–228). Before the one new man can become the glorious bride of Yeshua, refinement, repentance and reunification must occur. This is happening now with YHVH's people and will continue to happen until the return of Yeshua.

8 10:11–12a, *In the second year*. Israel had rested at the foot of Mount Sinai for slightly more than one year. According to the Torah, newlyweds (in this case, YHVH and Israel) were to spend one year together (getting to know each other) before going to war (Deut 24:5). It was now time for Israel to go to war—to fight their way to the Promised Land. With this biblical principle in mind, how would you characterize your spiritual walk? Are you in the warfare stage of your spiritual journey yet or are you still sitting (on the sidelines) in the same place spiritually that you were at the beginning of your journey? Have you fought the spiritual Canaanites, the serpents and scorpions, the heat and cold, hunger, doubt and unbelief, or have you *never* ventured outside of your spiritual comfort zones to do battle, to labor hard, to minister for YHVH in attempting to reach the Promised Land of his kingdom?

9 10:35, This verse is surrounded in the Torah scroll by a Hebrew letter *nun*/נ before and after that is inverted, so that they look like this: נ

The *nuns* are offset to emphasize some important truth in this verse. Some ancient rabbis teach that this one verse is an entire book of Torah by itself. Why? Perhaps it was because there was great joy in the camp when the glory cloud lifted, the priests hoisted the ark to their shoulders. When this happened, it was time for the camp to go forth as led by YHVH and his servants carrying the ark. Are you a part of the Camp of Israel, or are you a spiritual drifter or loner? Are you planted in the congregation of Israel? Do you know what your role and function is, and do you respect the leadership over you? When the glory cloud lifts and it is time for the camp to move on at the voice and leading of YHVH are you walking in sync with joy or are you always doing your own thing? Do you have your own agenda? Are you one who does what is “right in his own eyes” and if what the congregation of Israel is doing suits you, then you’ll follow, if not ... forget them?!

What was the glorious and victorious result of the glory of YHVH going before the camp of Israel with the Israelites following faithfully behind?

10 11:1–6, *When the people complained*. The people fell to complaining and murmuring. This was the beginning of a long list of such incidents in Israel's wilderness journey. Are we any different today? When was the last time you complained and murmured about something that bothered you going on within the congregation of believers? The services are too long. The children are too noisy. The building is too hot. I don't like the praise music. I don't like liturgy. The pastor is too long-winded, etc., etc.

11 12:1–3, *Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses*. This is slander! The Messianic Movement is not immune to this. It goes on continually. As long as we give in to gossip and slander we will grieve the Spirit of Elohim and will not advance spiritually. We're all guilty of this. Confess your sin and repent now!

Seven Ways to Misuse the Mouth

(From a book entitled *Stop the Runaway Conversation* by Dr. Michael Sedler)

- **The Backbiter:** One who speaks against an absent individual. All criticisms and comments, as the name implies, are made without the accused being present or are behind his back. (Ps 15:2–3; Rom 1:30; Prov 25:23; 2 Cor 12:20)
- **The Busybody:** One who seeks out information on a false report and spreads it by means of gossip, slander, backbiting, etc. YHVH takes this very seriously. In fact, he equates being a busybody with being an evildoer or even a murderer. (1 Pet 4:15; 1 Tim 5:13; 2 Thess 3:11)
- **The Complainer:** One who finds fault. This type of person often uses a personal situation as a platform for his or her complaint. “I was treated unfairly.” “Do you know what this person did?” You think that’s bad, let me tell you what happened to me.” These are the types of phrases you will come from such a person. (Num 11:1; Jude 16)
- **The Murmurer:** One who grumbles. We find that this person is usually complaining but only loudly enough for those in close proximity to hear. The murmuring person is seldom happy or pleased with the outcome of situations. Like the complainer, he looks for faults and then justifies a bad attitude with his comments. (Phil 2:14; Num 16:2; Jude 16)
- **The Slanderer:** This is an individual who tries to injure someone’s reputation or character by false and defamatory statements. (Num 14:36; Jer 6:28; 9:4; 1 Tim 3:11; Prov 10:18; Ps 101:5)
- **The Talebearer (or Gossip):** This is a person who elaborates and exaggerates so as to make a story more dramatic or “juicy”. (Prov 11:13; Lev 19:16; Rom 1:28–30; see also Prov 18:8; 20:19; 26:20,22; 1 Tim 5:13)
- **The Whisperer:** This is an individual who talks about other people privately, secretly and covertly in order to hurt them. (Prov 16:28; Ps 41:7)

12 12:1, Miriam was a prophetess (Exod 15:20). Prophetic people sometimes allow a spirit of Jezebel (rebellion, personal ambition and usurpation of control) to rise up within them. They will use “prophetic” words to usurp authority over those to whom YHVH has given authority in the congregation of his people. Such people will use their prophetic giftings to try to direct congregational leadership through “words from the Lord.” They will attack leaders through accusation in areas unrelated to their ambitions (as a diversionary tactic). Miriam did this with Moses by questioning his marriage, but her real ambition was to usurp control over Moses. What did YHVH think of this and what was her punishment for such misuse of her tongue?

HAFTORAH READING—ZECHARIAH 2:14 [10]–4:7

“Not By Might, Nor By Power, But By My Spirit,” Says YHVH

Zechariah’s ministry began circa 520 B.C. just after the end of the Jewish exile in Babylon. He was part of a remnant of Judah to return to the land of Israel from Babylon to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. His ministry as a prophet was one of encouraging the Jews to rebuild the Temple regardless of the opposition and obstacles in completing this task. Some of his prophecies are Messianic in nature in that he talks about the glory and restoration that will eventually come to Israel if it will complete the task at hand.

1 2:10, *I will dwell in the midst of you*. This is clearly a millennial prophecy, for one can hardly see the fulfillment of this in the modern state of Israel. (Read Leviticus 26:11–12.) Can YHVH live among a Torahless people? (Now read Leviticus 26:1–3, 9, 14ff.) If Zechariah’s prophecy is millennial, then what will be the standard of conduct for YHVH’s people to merit his dwelling among them?

- 2** **2:10–11**, *Many nations shall be joined...* This is the conclusion of Zechariah's third vision (2:1–13) where he describes the final glorious (millennial) exaltation of Jerusalem. During this time, many nations shall be joined to YHVH and shall become his people. This is a fulfillment of YHVH's promise to Abraham (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). Who will rule over, minister to, disciple and train these new converts/Israelites? (For the answer read Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6 and compare to 1 Pet 2:9.)
- 3** **3:1–10**, In this fourth vision of Zechariah, the nation of Israel will be cleansed and restored to its priestly status.
- 4** **3:1**, *Joshua*. In Hebrew, this is *Yehoshua* from which the English name *Joshua* and *Jesus* derive. *Yeshua* means "salvation" and is the shortened form of *Yehoshua* meaning "YHVH Saves." Read chapter three in its entirety to see how this individual is a prophetic picture of Yeshua the Messiah at his first coming. Please note the following parallels between the Yeshua that Zechariah mentions and the future Yeshua the Messiah:
- Verse 1, Both were named *Yehoshua*.
 - Verse 1, Both were high priests.
 - Verse 1, Satan the adversary resisted both.
 - Verse 3, Both were clothed with filthy garments (though the Messiah was sinless, he became sin by taking on the sins of the world at the cross).
 - Verses 4–5, Both were clothed in white robes of righteousness.
 - Verse 7—Both walked in righteousness to become a judge over Israel.
- 5** Next, let's discover the Messianic allusions found in this passage:
- Verse 8, *The Branch*. This is a Messianic title (also found in Zech 6:12; Isa 4:2; 11:1; Jer 23:5; 33:15).
 - Verse 9, *Stone ... upon one stone seven eyes*. (See Rev 5:6 and compare with Isa 11:2, read the whole chapter for context; see also Ps 118:22–23; Isaiah 8:13–15; 28:16; Dan 2:35,45; Matt 21:42; Eph 2:19–22 and 1 Pet 2:6–8.)
 - Verse 9, *Remove the sin of that land in a single day*. How does this point to Yeshua's redemptive work? (Compare this verse with Daniel 9:26.)
- 6** Chapter four speaks prophetically of a golden menorah lampstand and two olive trees. This menorah seems to be similar to the one in the Tabernacle of Moses, but as Keil and Delitzsch point out in their commentary, this lamp seems to be constructed in such a manner as to provide a constant and an endless supply of oil to keep the lamp burning (vol. 10, pp. 532–533). This speaks of a powerful and unstoppable spiritual anointing upon these two vessels of YHVH.

But who do Joshua and Zerubbabel prophetically represent? In her book, *Redeemed Israel: Reunited and Restored*, Batya Wootten, Hebrew roots teacher and spiritual forerunner, discusses this subject and its prophetic implications:

Before Israel entered into the Promised Land, Moses sent twelve men, one from each of the twelve tribes, to spy out the Promised Land. Only two returned with a good report: Caleb, from the tribe of Judah; and Joshua, from the tribe of Ephraim (Num 13:2,6,8). Thus, the first example of two witnesses who gave a good report about YHVH's promises were a Judahite and an Ephraimite.

Concerning witnesses, we also see that Messiah Yeshua said, "I will grant the power of prophecy to my two witnesses" (Rev 11:3, TAB). YHVH's two witnesses are anointed to speak for the Holy One of Israel. Yeshua describes them as "the two olive trees ... that stand before the [Elohim] of the earth" (Rev 11:4). After seeing two olive trees (or branches), Zechariah asked about them. YHVH answered, "These are the two who are anointed to serve [YHVH] of all the earth" (Zec. 4:11,14, NIV).

These two trees poured forth oil, a source of light, and Yeshua's two witnesses also are called "two lampstands." Lampstands are said to be congregations (*ekklesias*), thus they are two congregations of called out ones (Rev 11:3,4; 1:20). Lampstands give light, and Yeshua says of those who follow Him,

“You are the light of the world” (Matt 5:14).

Scripture describes two witnesses who are called to give forth light, and who are described as two congregations of peoples. Our Father is now calling forth two congregations. They are the “two sticks” that are presently being made “one in His hand” (Ezek 37:15–28). They are Judah and Ephraim.

Metaphorically, the two witnesses are two anointed olive trees who speak for the God [or Elohim] of Israel. Judaism and Christianity are the only two religions on earth that give testimony about Him. Although the people of Islam claim to follow Abraham's God, YHVH calls Himself “The [Elohim] of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Exod 3:16; Acts 3:13). Islam denies that Isaac and Jacob are Abraham's heirs, and instead claims that Ishmael is Abraham's true heir. Therefore, their god *Allah* and the Elohim of Abraham cannot be one and the same.

Wootten's interpretation of this interesting passage is not the only one. *The NIV Study Bible* states that the two olive trees of Zechariah 4:3 represent the priestly and royal offices of Israel with a continuing supply of oil (anointing) to fulfill their duties, while the two olive branches of verse 12 are Joshua the priest and Zeurubabel, the builder of the second temple. “The combination of the priestly and royal lines and their functions ultimately point to the Messianic King–Priest and his offices and functions [a reference to Yeshua, the Messiah]” (p. 1404). In a similar vein, the *Spirit Filled Life Bible* states that the two olive trees (verse 3) or anointed ones (verse 14) are Joshua, representing the religious authority, and Zerubbabel, the civil authority, and that they are archetypes of the two witnesses mentioned in Revelation 11:3–4 (p. 1368). Bullinger, in his *Companion Bible*, agrees that these two olive trees point to the two end-time witnesses of Revelation. Matthew Henry in his commentary believes that as Joshua and Zerubbabel built the physical temple, so these two combine spiritually and prophetically to point to the work of Yeshua, the Anointed Priest and King whose mission it was to build the spiritual temple consisting of the body of believers. Keil and Delitzsch state that the “burning lamps were a symbol of the church or of the nation of God, which causes the light of its spirit, or of its knowledge of God, to shine before the Lord, and lets it stream out into the night of a world estranged from God.” They then call our attention to the Gospel passages where Yeshua commands his disciples to be lights to the world (Matt 5:14,16; Luke 12:35 cp. Phil 2:15). “The correctness of this explanation of the meaning of the candlestick is placed beyond doubt by Revelation 1:20, where the seven [lamps], which John saw before the throne of God, are explained as being the seven *ekkllesias* [churches], which represent the new people of God, viz., the Christian church” (vol. 10, p. 534).

Are not all these interpretations, more or less, saying the same thing, except that some are more comprehensive and all inclusive than others in that the fuller panoply of YHVH's Word is taken into consideration?

7 **4:6**, *Not by might ... but by my Spirit*. Zerubbabel was the governor over a seemingly insignificant territory that was part of the huge Persian Empire. What power did he have to accomplish anything great for YHVH? He was a nobody in Nowhereville! That is the question that you may be asking yourself regarding accomplishing the great ministry plans YHVH has laid on your heart.

8 **4:7**, *Great mountain*. Through faith in the power of YHVH's Spirit, we, like Zerubbabel, can overcome mountainous obstacles so that the hindrances before us to accomplishing YHVH-ordained tasks melt away and the path becomes level. (Read Matt 17:20; 21:21; Mark 11:23; 1 John 5:4; Phil 4:13; Rom 8:37.) Yeshua is both the Chief Cornerstone (Eph 2:20–22; 1 Pet 2:7; Acts 4:11) and the Head (Eph 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:19), or the Foundation and Capstone of all that we do. What does YHVH's Word promise to those who, by his grace, overcome? (See Rev 2:11,26; 3:5,12.)

