

למה נסמכה פרשת המנורה לפרשת הנשיאים ?

Rashi asks, at the very beginning of the parsha, why the account of the Menorah follows the account of the princes' gifts.

לפי שכשראה אהרון חנכת הנשיאים חלשה אז דעתו, שלא היה עימהם בחנכה לא הוא ולא שבטו

The answer he gives is that Aharon was very upset that the princes had this big part in the consecration of the Mishkan, but he and his children – the cohanim or priestly class – apparently had nothing.

אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא: חייו, שלך גדולה משלהם, שאתה מדליק ומיטיב את הנרות
Rashi then has Hashem saying to him that whereas the princes had a one time event of bring their gifts, Aharon and his descendants would clean, prepare and light the Menorah in the Mishkan.

במה גדולה הדלקת הנרות מקורבנות הנשיאים?

The Midrash asks why lighting the lamps – of the Menorah – is more important than the offerings of the princes.

הקורבנות כל זמן שבית המקדש קיים היו נוהגין, אבל הנרות לעולם קיימין
and answers that offerings were brought only while the Temple was standing, but the lights are for always.

אך עם זה עדיין קשה להבין, והלא בזמן שבית-המקדש אינו קיים ואין הקורבנות נוהגים הן גם המנורה אינה קיימת?

However, there is still a problem with this, for when the offerings stopped because the Temple was no more, also the Menorah was no more.

אומר הרמב"ן שעל-ידי בניו החשמונאים יתרחשו ניסים ונפלאות בחנוכה שניה
The Ranban explains that the descendants of Aharon, the Hasmonean family, would reconsecrate the Temple and be granted the miracle of the oil in the Menorah lasting eight days. They would also leave, for the following generations, the commandment to celebrate Hanukah by lighting candles every year for eight days. These Hanukah lights, which are lit even though there is no Temple, are what the Midrash was referring to when it said אבל הנרות לעולם קיימין "but the lights are for always".

In our time, we believe that our table has replaced the מזבח – the altar – and our daily prayers and the blessings, such as before and after meals and drinks, have replaced the קורבנות – the offerings.

We also say that the Torah is אור – light – so our words of Torah at the table can be considered like the lights that were lit in the Temple.

May it be the will of Hashem that we will always be blessed with the opportunity to sit with our family, celebrate our family events, and share together the light of Torah, so that we too can say:

אבל הנרות לעולם קיימין "but the lights are for always".