

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators presents

# *An Interactive* **PARSHA EXPERIENCE**



Sponsored by the Rosekind Family in honor of Gary Rosekind z"l, father of Barry Rosekind (PEP Cohort 18). We bless Barry and his fellow PEP graduates to always seek humility as Moshe finds in God's eyes, and when he prays for Miriam's health.

**Parsha:** Behaalotekha

**Title:** A Desire to Serve

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## The Parsha at First Glance

### Spotlight on the Parsha:

When you read a book, do you ever wonder why the author chooses to tell the story in a particular order? Rashi often wonders about that question when it comes to the information in the Torah. He frequently asks why one passage of the Torah is placed next to another passage in the Torah, especially when there is no obvious connection between the two sections.

This week's Torah portion, *Parshat Behaalotekha*, begins with God instructing Moshe to tell his older brother, Aharon the High Priest, to light the *menorah* in the Tabernacle. The Torah portion last week ended with the story of the dedication of the Tabernacle.

Rashi asks: Why does the passage about the menorah follow the story of the dedication of the Tabernacle? Are these two events somehow connected?

### Zooming In:

Rashi suggests that the key to understanding the connection between these two events is to think about who was and who was not involved in each. As part of the dedication ceremony of the Tabernacle, the *nesi'im* (tribal leaders) brought a lot of gifts and sacrifices. The tribe of Levi, Aharon's tribe, was the only tribe that did not participate in the dedication ceremony. Aharon became upset that neither he nor his tribe participated, so God tried to cheer up Aharon by reminding him that he has a special role in the Tabernacle service. God told Aharon, "Your part is of greater importance than theirs, for you will light and set in order the lamps (for the menorah)."



Most of us have felt left out sometimes in our lives so we know that it is a really bad feeling. Rashi says that God tried to make Aharon feel better by highlighting the fact that Aharon has the privilege of lighting the menorah. But it's strange that out of all the ways God could have tried to make Aharon feel special, God chose to mention the menorah. The Torah tells us in Exodus 27:21 that all priests are allowed to light the menorah in the Tabernacle. If God wanted to remind Aharon that he is special and unique then why not mention a *mitzvah* that is reserved exclusively for the high priest?

Perhaps the reason that Aharon had been upset was not because he'd felt left out from the group of *nesi'im* (tribal leaders). After all, Aharon knows that as the high priest he performs certain *mitzvot* that nobody else in the whole nation is ever allowed to perform. But Aharon performs those *mitzvot*, because he is obligated to do so.

The *nesi'im* were not commanded to bring all kinds of lavish gifts to God at the dedication ceremony of the Tabernacle. They were simply so grateful to God and so desperately wanted to show Him their appreciation that they decided on their own to bring Him all these gifts. Aharon respects and admires the *nesi'im* for going beyond the call of duty to serve God.

He wished that he too could have a chance to voluntarily express his appreciation for God instead of only performing *mitzvot* as a way to fulfill his obligation.

Recognizing Aharon's wish, God comes to Aharon after the *nesi'im* bring their volunteer gifts and reminds him that he too goes beyond the call of duty every single day when he lights the menorah. Though any priest could perform that *mitzvah*, Aharon the High Priest makes a point to light it each day because he values the opportunity to serve God even in ways that he is not obligated to do so.



## The Parsha Through Another Lens

### Discussion Time:

Do you think it is a greater achievement to fulfill a daily obligation or to perform a volunteer task? For example, is it more impressive for a person to go to work every day or to volunteer on Sundays at a soup kitchen? Is it more impressive for someone to take out the garbage every day because his parents assign him that chore or because he realizes that the garbage is starting to get smelly?

Can you think of a scenario in which you would get greater satisfaction from fulfilling an obligation than volunteering? How about the reverse?

### Shabbat Shalom!