

THE MENORAH: IGNITING THE SOUL OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

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Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

The Kindling of the Menorah in the Midbar

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The Purest Droplet for the Menorah

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The Order of the Princes – Without Aaron

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Toiling Versus Finding

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In Honor of the Inauguration of the Mishkan

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A Quantum Leap that Results in Second Place

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1. The 12 Princes inaugurated the *Mishkan* with gifts and sacrifices over a 12 day period.
2. *Moshe* had a question: should the order be according to age or travel formation?
3. If it would be birth, Reuvein would be the first; if would be travel formation, Yehuda would be first.
4. It was dictated by G-d that the order should be according to travel.
5. *Rashi*: Reuvein came with a claim that they should precede Yissachar because they are the first born.
6. G-d said, because Yissachar suggested the gifts and sacrifices in honor of the inauguration, he precedes Reuvein.
7. Another reason: since Yissachar represents *Torah*, he supersedes Reuvein.
8. Why does the *Midrash* have to validate Yissachar's position if G-d said the order should be according to travel formation?
9. It was only because Yissachar made the suggestion and represents *Torah*, did G-d say that it should be according to travel formation.

Ramchal: Existence As Willed by G-d

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1. All existence is contingent on G-d's continuous Providence, willing that all should be.
2. G-d's essence is not contingent on anything other than Himself.
3. The scope & parameters of all that exists & their systems are only effective to the degree that G-d endowed them.
4. Although in the physical and spiritual realm there are systems and orders, G-d is not bound by any of them because He is the Master.
5. G-d created existence for the sake of good.
6. Evil only exists for man to choose to suppress and negate it.
7. There are many things we witness, experience, and see, which seem contrary to the objective of creation. At the end of time, in retrospect, we will see that it was all for good.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Beha'aloscha

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The Far Reaching Effect of Sin

Midrash: Why does the *Torah* juxtapose the inauguration of the *Mishkan* to the kindling of the *Menorah*? When *Aaron* saw the inauguration of the *Mishkan* through the participation of the Princes of Israel, He was distraught because neither he nor his tribe were included. G-d said to him, "I swear on your life that yours (participation) is greater than theirs. You will kindle and perfect the lights (of the *Menorah*)."

Aaron initially believed that he was excluded from the inauguration of the *Mishkan* because he was not worthy due to his involvement with the sin of the golden calf. When *Aaron* began officiating in the *Mishkan* as the High Priest, he brought his personal offering and that of the Jewish people. However, the fire did not descend from heaven to consume them. The fire was a representation of the Divine Presence (*Shechina*) entering into the *Mishkan*. When *Aaron* saw that the Divine Presence did not descend, he was

pained. He said to *Moshe*, "*Moshe*, my brother, you embarrassed me! The reason the *Shechina* did not descend is because G-d is angry with me (because of his involvement with the Golden Calf)."

Moshe and *Aaron* immediately entered the Tent to pray for Mercy. Consequently, the fire came down and consumed the sacrifices. *Aaron* was continuously concerned about his qualification as the High Priest due to his lack of worthiness. Because he had participated in the golden calf, he felt that he was tainted.

Chazal: *Aaron's* two sons *Nadav* and *Avihu* were killed by G-d as a result of bringing a strange fire before G-d. This was a punishment to *Aaron* because of his participation with the golden calf. "G-d protects the feet of his devoutly righteous." However, since *Aaron* was involved with the golden calf, his merit was diminished and therefore his sons did not have the sufficient clarity. Consequently, they lost their lives.

Although *Aaron* repented for his sin and brought the sacrifice to atone for himself, he believed that he was excluded from the inauguration of the *Mishkan* as a prince of the tribe of *Levy* because he was spiritually unfit. G-d responded to him saying, "I swear on your life that yours (participation) is greater than theirs." With this, He communicated to *Aaron* that he was truly worthy.

Midrash: *Aaron* was not only distraught that he was excluded from the inauguration of the *Mishkan*, but also that his entire tribe was excluded. One could understand why *Aaron* initially believed that he was excluded from the inauguration of the *Mishkan*, but why would the entire tribe of *Levy* who had no relevance to the sin of the golden calf be excluded? When *Moshe* descended from the mountain, he declared, "Who is for G-d shall come with me." The entire tribe of *Levy*, although they were small in number, immediately responded to purge the Jewish people from those who had sinned with idolatry.

If in fact the tribe of *Levy* was worthy to be part of the inauguration of the *Mishkan*, and yet they were not included, it is evident that it is not due to a deficiency within them, but rather it is for some reason that is only known to G-d. If so, why did *Aaron* ascribe his exclusion due to his lack of worthiness? When the *Torah* mentions *Korach*, regarding his mutiny against *Moshe*, it traces his lineage only until the generation of *Levy*, the son of *Yaakov*. It does not mention *Yaakov*, our Patriarch as being the beginning of the line.

Rashi: When *Yaakov* gave the blessing to his children before he passed away, he prayed that his name would not be mentioned regarding the incident of *Korach*.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: The reason *Yaakov* did not want his name to be associated with *Korach* was not because of a disgrace of his own honor, but rather he did not want the evil of his behavior to affect the spiritual status of the entire Jewish people. If a diseased branch of a tree is not removed from the trunk, it will affect the trunk and eventually cause the entire tree to become diseased and die.

Yaakov, our Patriarch, is the equivalent of the trunk of a tree and the tribes are its branches. If the impurity of *Korach* would be associated with *Yaakov* and seep into his spirituality, then the entire Jewish people, who descend from *Yaakov*, would become affected by that impurity. *Aaron* was concerned that since he was the

prince of the tribe of *Levy*, being the most spiritually advanced of his tribe, perhaps his personal failing (due to the golden calf) had brought a spiritual deficiency upon the entire tribe. Thus, they were disqualified from the inauguration of the *Mishkan*.

To this, G-d said that his involvement is greater than theirs. Neither he nor his tribe had any spiritual deficiency; but rather, his involvement in the *Mishkan* was reserved for a service that is greater than all of the other princes. The kindling of the *Menorah* would affect and facilitate the elucidation of the written *Torah* until the end of time since the illumination of the *Menorah* symbolizes the Oral Law.

The Greatness of Aaron

Midrash: When *Aaron* saw the inauguration of the *Mishkan* through the participation of the Princes of Israel, He was distraught because neither he nor his tribe were included. G-d said to him, "I swear on your life that yours (participation) is greater than theirs. You will kindle and perfect the lights (of the *Menorah*)."

Ramban: Why did G-d need to console *Aaron* by telling him that his *mitzvah* of kindling the *Menorah* is greater than that of the Princes? *Aaron*, as the High Priest was the only one qualified to officiate on *Yom Kippur* and enter into the Holy of Holies. In addition, the involvement of the Princes was only at the time of the inauguration. In contrast, *Aaron*, as the High Priest officiated on a continuous basis by bringing the incense offering in addition to the other sacrifices.

G-d instructed *Moshe* regarding the participation of the Princes in the inauguration of the *Mishkan*. They brought their gifts and sacrifices over a twelve-day period in a specific order. The *Torah* delineates each of the gifts and offerings of each Prince. Each Prince brought the identical gift and offerings. The *Torah* repeats what each Prince had brought on his particular day verbatim twelve times. It would seem that the *Torah* could have expressed itself in a more concise manner, rather than repeating itself twelve times. There is nothing in the *Torah* that is superfluous.

Ramban: Although each gift and offering that was given by each Prince was identical in the physical context, regarding its spiritual representation of each tribe, the innateness of the gifts were not the same. Each tribe,

within the spiritual infrastructure of the Jewish people, had its own unique identity and function. Each Prince, representing his tribe, infused the gifts and offerings with the intent that represented the spiritual profile of his tribe.

Aaron was distraught because his tribe was not represented within the infrastructure of the Jewish people, regarding the inauguration of the *Mishkan*. G-d said to *Aaron* that regarding the spirituality of the Jewish people, his contribution is greater than theirs. *Aaron's* participation through the kindling of the lights of the *Menorah*, although it is classified as one of the *mitzvos* regarding the service in the *Mishkan*, its innate value was greater than the gifts of all the Princes.

Gemara: The illumination of the *Menorah* symbolizes the Oral Law, thus its kindling draws Divine Assistance to help the Jewish people to fathom G-d's intent regarding the Written Law. If one wants to attain wisdom, he should pray in a southerly direction because the *Menorah*, which was in the covered sanctuary in the Temple, was located on the southern wall.

The *Torah* itself, regarding the Jewish people, is the equivalent of the soul that is infused in the body. Although the contribution of the Princes represents the spiritual infrastructure of the Jewish people that is the equivalent of the body, it remains a non-functional entity without the *Torah* that is the equivalent of the soul. The tribe of *Levy*, through *Aaron's* kindling of the *Menorah*, provided the spiritual soul to be infused into the infrastructure of the Jewish people.

"And *Aaron* did so..."

Rashi: This is to tell us the praiseworthiness of *Aaron* that he did not deviate. Seemingly, the kindling of the *Menorah* was not a difficult *mitzvah* to perform. If this is so, what is the basis for *Aaron* to have deviated from fulfilling it correctly? When G-d said to *Aaron* that his participation is greater than the others, it is possible that *Aaron* could have experienced a degree of pride because it was only through his kindling that the Jewish people assumed a functional value. Even the most righteous person would feel a fleeting sense of pride.

The *Torah* attests to the greatness of *Aaron* that despite his invaluable contribution through the kindling of the *Menorah*, because of his unique degree of humility he was not affected whatsoever. If he would have had a sense of pride, it would have been considered to be a

deviation, and his kindling would have brought about a limited result.

Gemara: One of the liquids to which the *Torah* is compared to is water. Just as water flows from an elevated location to a lower one where it accumulates, so too can the *Torah* only be acquired and retained by the one who has a humble spirit. The greater the degree of one's humility, the greater is one's capacity to fathom and retain the truth of *Torah*.

Because *Moshe* was the most humble person who ever walked the face of the earth, he was the most qualified to be the one to receive the *Torah* on behalf of the Jewish people. Because of his total negation to G-d, he had the greatest capacity to be its recipient. Since the characteristic of humility is a prerequisite for coming upon the truth of *Torah* and retaining it, so too the one who is most qualified to activate the forces of Divine Assistance to allow the Jewish people to comprehend and fathom the truth of *Torah* must not sense any degree of pride. Since *Aaron's* humility did not allow him to experience the slightest degree of pride, his kindling had brought about the greatest degree of Divine Assistance for the Jewish people to come upon the Truth of *Torah*.

The Sacrifice of the Tribe of Levy on Behalf of the Jewish People

Midrash: "G-d tests the devoutly righteous" (*Psalms*). G-d does not elevate one to a position of honor and greatness until he is first tested. If he endures and succeeds in the tests that were given to him, then G-d will elevate him to a position of status. *Avraham* our Patriarch was tested in ten areas. Only after he succeeded in all of these tests did G-d bless him, as it states, 'G-d blessed *Avraham* with everything.' G-d tested *Yitzchak* our Patriarch with *Avimelech*. After he succeeded, he was blessed. G-d also tested *Yaakov*, our Patriarch with many difficulties and hardships such as those regarding *Esav*, *Rachel*, *Dina*, *Yosef*, *Shimon*, *Binyamin*. He was also challenged with his material state when he fled from the home of his father as it states, 'With my walking staff I crossed...' After he succeeded, G-d blessed him.

"*Yosef* was tested with the wife of his master *Potiphar* and twelve years of imprisonment, but after he succeeded, he ascended to be king. The Tribe of

Levy gave their lives to sanctify the Name of G-d so that *Torah* should not be nullified. When the Jewish people were in Egypt they detested the *Torah* and circumcision. They all became idolaters. They were involved in all forms of abominations. However, during the days of darkness all those who were truly evil were removed from among the Jewish people. Those who did not perish during that plague had repented.

Throughout the entire years of bondage, the Tribe of *Levy* remained devoutly righteous. They observed the *Torah* and were circumcised. When the Jewish people sinned with the Golden Calf, the Tribe of *Levy* did not participate. When G-d saw that they were righteous, He tested the Tribe of *Levy* and they succeeded. After they withstood the tests, the *Torah* states, "The Levites shall be Mine," which is the ultimate level of exaltedness. However, regarding the evil ones who love corruption, G-d despises them.

It is interesting to note that the Tribe of *Levy* sanctified G-d's Name through the sacrifice of their lives for the perpetuation of *Torah*. The *Midrash* did not state that they had sacrificed themselves for the sake of G-d but rather for the sake of the spiritual life source of the Jewish people, which is the *Torah* itself. Before *Moshe* passed away, he blessed the Tribe of *Levy* that they should be the disseminators of definitive *Torah*. Because they fully internalized the fact that the Jewish people could not survive without the *Torah* itself, they were chosen to be responsible for its dissemination.

Looking for an Alternative

"The people took to seeking complaints; it was evil in the eyes of G-d and G-d heard and His Wrath flared, and a fire of *Hashem* burned against them, and it consumed at the edge of the camp." Who were those who complained? It was those who sought out complaint. G-d had provided all of the conceivable needs and amenities that were necessary for the Jewish people. They were given the Manna to sustain them physically and spiritually. They were given an unlimited source of water which flowed from the wellspring of *Miriam*. In addition, they were engulfed by the Clouds of Glory that provided every level of protection and comfort.

They basked in G-d's Presence throughout this period of time. G-d's obviousness could not be denied. If this was their predicament, why would they seek out

a reason to complain? They should have been fully content. The only basis for one to complain is when one is lacking or unhappy. If in fact there was nothing to which their unhappiness could be attributed, it is evident that it was G-d Himself. They were in essence saying that they had no interest in Him. This is the position of one who is defiant.

Despite the fact that it was obvious that there was no alternative to G-d, they nevertheless sought to complain. It is stated in the Ten Commandments, "Do not covet your fellow's house...your fellow's wife...or anything that belongs to your fellow." How is it possible for one who has an interest in his fellow's belongings to control this inappropriate desire?

Ibn Ezra: This can be explained with an allegory. When the Prince chooses to marry the Princess, regardless of her beauty and other qualities, a commoner does not envy the Prince for marrying her. This is because the commoner understands with certainty that the Princess has no relevance to him as a commoner. There is no basis for consideration, since she is not within the context of his choice.

Identically, if one would understand and internalize that every individual's personal predicament is unique and specific for that person through G-d's endowment, then he will not be envious of his fellow's successes or possessions because they have no relevance to his existence. If one in fact does desire his fellow's possessions, it is only because he did not internalize this belief and reality. The only reason one has a sense of lack and unhappiness is because he believes that greater success and opportunity is available to him.

This is the understanding of the dictum that is stated in the *Mishna* in *Ethics of our Fathers*, "Who is the wealthy one? It is the one who is happy with his lot." This is the person who truly internalizes the fact that what G-d has given him is meant to be his and not more.

Gemara: "One's material allocation (for the year) is set from *Rosh Hashanah* to *Rosh Hashanah*." One cannot earn or achieve, within the material realm, more than what G-d allotted to him, regardless of his initiatives. G-d became enraged at those who sought to complain in the desert because understanding and realizing His Omnipotence, there was no basis to feel lacking. It was only because they believed that there was an alternative to G-d that they sought to complain.

Chovos Halevavos: One should be overwhelmed with thankfulness to G-d for everything that He has bestowed upon him. If so, then why is one not content and satisfied? It is because one chooses to focus on what he does not have rather than on what he does have. Because one has a tendency to focus on what his fellow possesses, it causes him to focus on what he does not have.

When *Esav* met his brother *Yaakov*, after not seeing him for many years, he noticed the camps of *Yaakov's* people and asked, "Who are these (people) to you?" *Yaakov* responded, "The Children who G-d has graciously given to your servant." *Esav* then asked *Yaakov* regarding the gift that was sent to him. *Yaakov* answered that it was sent to find favor in his eyes. *Esav* responded to *Yaakov* by saying, "I have much. My brother, let what you have remain yours." *Yaakov* urged his brother to accept the gift as an expression of his reverence for him. He urged *Esav* saying, "Please accept my gift which was brought to you, inasmuch as G-d has been gracious to me and inasmuch as I have everything."

Yaakov expressed himself regarding what G-d had given him as having "everything" because he recognized that whatever he was meant to have would be provided by G-d, unrelated to his initiative. On the contrary, *Esav*, who was the one who personified the material, believed that all his successes were due to his initiative and ability. Therefore, he did not believe that he had everything because there was so much more for him to accomplish and acquire.

The Unbroken Chain of Tradition

"*Hashem* spoke to *Moshe*, in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the second year from their exodus from the land of Egypt, in the first month saying, 'The Children of Israel shall make the *Pesach* offering in its appointed time...'"

Midrash: The Portion earlier in the beginning of *Bamidbar* stated, "*Hashem* spoke to *Moshe* in the Wilderness of Sinai...in the second month, in the second year..." (which is the month of *Iyar*.) The Portion of *Beha'aloscha* which is a later portion begins with '*Hashem* spoke to *Moshe*...in the first month...' This is to teach us that the events in the *Torah* are not necessarily presented in chronological order." If this is so, why did the *Torah* not simply present the events of the first month before those of the second month to be in a sequential order?

It is because it would not have reflected well on the Jewish people. The Pascal lamb that was brought in the desert during the second year was the only one that was brought during the entire forty years in the desert. If the Pascal offering of the desert would have been mentioned at the opening of the Portion of *Bamidbar*, it would magnify the disgraceful incident of the spies, which caused them to wander the desert for forty years. Due to their spiritual failing, regarding the spies, a northerly wind that is essential for the clotting of blood did not blow. Consequently, the Jewish people were not able to circumcise themselves and thus could not bring the Pascal sacrifice. One is not qualified to bring a Pascal offering if any individual in the family is not circumcised.

Ramban: Another reason why the Jewish people were told to bring a Pascal lamb in the desert was because the only Pascal offering that was brought outside of Israel had been in Egypt before the Jewish people had left. (At that time they had not yet received the *Torah* and did not have the status of being "the Jewish people.")

The *Torah* discusses the obligation of the Pascal lamb within the context of entering into the Land of Israel. There is no mention to bring the Pascal lamb outside of the Land of Israel. Therefore, the *Torah* needed to present the obligation of the Pascal sacrifice in the desert. The necessity of the Pascal lamb in the desert was so that it should be a reminder of the redemption and the miracles that were performed on their behalf and their forefathers. There should be a direct transmission of the miracles from the generation that experienced them to the next generation and their children after them.

There should be an unbroken chain of transmission of the miracles that had occurred during the redemption from Egypt. Had the Pascal sacrifice not been brought in the desert, there would have been a forty-year hiatus from the time they had left Egypt. The generation that had experienced the miracles would no longer be alive when the Jewish people would enter into the Land of Israel because they all perished during the forty-year period. Thus, G-d commanded them to bring the Pascal sacrifice in the desert so that the younger generation could hear directly from those who experienced the exodus.

Through the bringing of the Pascal sacrifice in the desert, the *Torah* is communicating to us the value of *mesorah* (transmission). It is so that the one who had

actually experienced the miracle should communicate it to the one who was not exposed to it. It should not merely be based on hearsay from one generation to the next, but rather, an unbroken chain of transmission from those who actually were present.

“Every man: your mother and father shall you revere. My Sabbaths shall you observe – I am *Hashem*, your G-d.”

Rashi: Although there is a *Torah* obligation to revere one’s parents, one may think that if his father commands him to violate the *Shabbos* on his behalf, he would be obligated to heed his request. The *Torah* juxtaposes “I am *Hashem*, your G-d” to teach us that G-d’s honor supersedes the reverence of one’s parents because they are also obligated to revere and honor G-d.

Reb Meir Simcha: The credibility and authenticity of the *Torah* is based on its immutable transmission from Sinai. The transmission is from father to son throughout the generations. The only way to guarantee that a child will give credence and value to the teaching of his father is only if he reveres his parents within the hierarchy of the family.

If a child is obligated to honor his parents, he will give special value to the information being transmitted to him by his parents. However, if one did not revere and see one’s parents in a special light, the transmission of the *Torah* from father to son would be in jeopardy because the teachings of the father would not be valued sufficiently to give them credence. We find that remembering the exodus from Egypt is an essential component of one’s belief.

Ramban in his commentary on the *Torah*: The revealed miracles in Egypt gave the Jewish people and the world an understanding that although G-d, before He had brought the plagues upon Egypt, seemed to have removed Himself from the world, this was not so. The miracles of Egypt revealed that every aspect of existence, even nature, is due to G-d’s continuous providence. It is a fundamental of Jewish belief that G-d had taken them from Egypt. The credibility of that fact is based on tradition – the transmission from generation to generation, from father to son. If one would not revere his father and mother, the credibility of that fact would fade into the oblivion. Consequently, G-d would have no relevance to existence.



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