



Partners In Torah
San Diego-Los Angeles-Ventura
Take home Dvar Torah

5785 Behaalotcha
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Hello, Welcome!

**Partners In Torah is a community-wide,
independent and inclusive adult education
program**

**focusing on understanding Jewish
relevancy to our lives by studying text
most interesting to each participant.**

**Through one-on-one discussion for 1 hour
each week, friendships are forged between
mentors and mentees.**

***Partners in Torah
has proven to be effective at reclaiming the
rich
legacy of wisdom, inspiration, and
guidance
for many who have, until now, lacked
access.***

Thank you for joining us!

**Please encourage friends to join you in
participating so that we may grow
together as
a community.**

תשפ"ה Behaalotcha

This week's Torah reading begins with Hashem instructing Aharon the High Priest on how to light the Menorah as part of the daily Tabernacle service. When lighting the *Menorah*, Aharon had to position both the three wicks on the right and the three wicks on the left to face the center wick. Each day at sundown, he would light the *Menorah*, and the candles would burn throughout the night. This is the commandment (Numbers 8:1,2):

(א) וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:
(ב) דַּבֵּר אֶל אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּהַעֲלֹתְךָ אֶת הַנֵּרוֹת אֶל מוּל פְּנֵי הַמְּנוֹרָה וְאִירוּ שִׁבְעַת הַנֵּרוֹת:

1) Hashem spoke to Moshe saying, 2) "Speak to Aharon and say to him: 'When you kindle the lamps, toward the face of the Menorah shall the seven lamps cast their light.'"

Rashi addresses the peculiar usage of the word בהעלתך - literally translated "when you make (the lamps) go up". Why not use the word used when lighting the Shabbat and Chanukah candles, "להדליק" to kindle?

Rashi, quoting the Sages, explains that the Torah is teaching us two lessons with this word.

בהעלתך - על שם שהלהב עולה כתוב בהדלקתן לשון עליה שצריך להדליק עד שתהא שלהבת עולה מאליה ועוד דרשו רבותינו מכאן שמעלה היתה לפני המנורה שעליה הכהן עומד ומטיב

Because the natural tendency of a flame is to go upwards, the word "make it go up" is used, to teach us that the Cohen must hold the candle to the wick until it goes up on its own. Additionally, our Sages have

learned from here that there must be three steps leading up to the Menorah so the Cohen can (go up) and stand on them when cleaning out the Menorah's cups.

The Mishna in Tractate Midot (3:9) indeed says:

וְאָבֵן הָיְתָה לְפָנֵי הַמְּנוֹרָה וּבָהּ שְׁלֹשׁ מַעְלוֹת, שֶׁעָלֶיהָ הִכְהֵן עוֹמֵד וּמְטִיב אֶת הַנְּרוֹת.

A three-step stone upon which the Cohen would stand when cleaning out the Menorah, was positioned in front of the Menorah.

The commentaries wonder why a *stepstool* would be necessary to clean out the Menorah. The Menorah measured 18 *tefachim* (a *tefach* is a *handbreadth*) high - about 4'6" and the average height of a person is about 5'6". Why wouldn't the extra foot suffice for the Cohen to see properly into the cups.

The Siftei Chachamim, a commentary on Rashi, answers that the *tefachim* of the Menorah were larger than regular *tefachim*, and therefore, the Menorah was about the same height as an average person.

The next verse tells us:

(ג) וַיַּעַשׂ בֶּן אֱהֲרֹן אֶל מוּל פְּנֵי הַמְּנוֹרָה הָעֵלָה נִרְתְּיָהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְדֹוֹד אֶת מֹשֶׁה

3) Aharon did so; toward the face of the Menorah he kindled its lamps, as Hashem had commanded Moshe.

Rashi comments:

ויעש בן אהרן להגיד שבחו שלא שינה

Aharon did so: *The Torah here is teaching us Aharon's praise - he did not change* (anything).

Rashi's comment quoted from the *Sifri*, created quite a commotion.

It seems that Aharon's praise was that he did exactly as he was told without changing anything. That's a praise for a holy Jew such as Aharon? How could anyone think that he would change something?

One answer is that the Torah is teaching us that throughout the years that Aharon lit the Menorah, *he* did not change. Usually, the first time one performs a mitzvah, he is very excited about it and does it with focus and enthusiasm. But, as he does the mitzvah day after day, it loses its luster and becomes like a habit. The Torah is teaching us Aharon's greatness in that **he** did not change. As time went on, he lit the Menorah with the same degree of excitement and enthusiasm as he had, the very first time he lit the Menorah.

Rabbi Yosef MiSalant in his book Beer Yosef presents an enlightening approach to answer both of these questions; why the need for the stepstool, and what's the praise for Aharon that he did not change anything.

Rabbeinu Bachya (1255-1340) explains the meaning of the seven branches of the Menorah.

ועל דרך השכל המנורה בשבעה נרותיה תרמוז לתורה הנקראת אור שנאמר
(משלי ו, כג) כי נר מצוה ותורה אור, והיא כוללת שבע חכמות ועל כן היו נרותיה
שבעה

A logical approach would be that the Menorah and its seven candles hint to the Torah, which is called light, and the Torah includes the seven fields of wisdom. Therefore, there were seven branches.

Rabbi Yonasan Eibeshutz (1690-1764) in his work *Yaaros Dvash* elaborates on the concept presented by Rabbeinu Bachya.

ספר יערות דבש - חלק שני - דרוש ז

ונראה כי שבעה נרות הם שבעה חכמות, כי ידוע כי חכמה היא מכונה בשם נר, חכמת אדם תאיר פניו, ושבעה נרות הם חכמת חייונים, ונר מערבי היא חכמת תורתנו הקדושה, שכינה במערב, וכל החכמות משתלשלות מתורתנו ומשם מקורם ושמה ישובו, כי כולם הם נערות המשרתות את המלכה, כמ"ש הרמב"ם [אגרות הרמב"ם פאר הדור סמ"א] שהם לרקחות ולטבחות, וכולם צריכים לתורתנו, כאשר הארכתי בזה וחברתי ספר מיוחד, ועל זה אדני הספר הטבעו, כי כל החכמות הם: פרפראות וצורך לתורתנו,

It would appear that the seven candles refer to the seven branches of wisdom. It is known that wisdom is referred to as "a candle" as it says, "A man's wisdom lights up his face" (Ecclesiastes 8:1), and the Menorah's seven arms represent the seven external fields of wisdom. The western candle (the central arm of the Menorah is called the "ner maaravi," the western candle) represents the wisdom of the Holy Torah. All the external fields of wisdom are sourced in the Torah; they emanate from the Torah, and it is to the Torah that they return. They are all like maidens who serve the queen, as Maimonides says, "they are cooks and bakers." They all require our Torah, as I explained at length in a special book that I wrote on this very topic; all the external fields of wisdom are like condiments because they are necessary to explain and properly execute the laws of the Torah.

Rabbi Yosef MiSalant explains "Aharon did not change anything" to mean that Aharon rose to the occasion and completely fulfilled Hashem's goal when lighting the Menorah. He mastered all the other branches of wisdom, and through them, brought forth deep wisdom and untold secrets from the Torah, enhancing its understanding and showcasing its beauty.

The three steps leading up to the Menorah, represent the necessary preparation that one must undergo before being worthy of receiving the holy light of the Torah. What is that? Perfect character.

As it says in the Midrash:

מדרש רבה ויקרא - פרשה ט פסקה ג

לשמור את דרך עץ החיים דרך זו דרך ארץ ואח"כ עץ החיים זו תורה

First comes דרך ארץ – proper character, then comes the Torah.

The Torah is teaching us that for the Cohen who is lighting the Menorah to derive the maximum benefit from the holy Torah light emanating from the Menorah, he must be of perfect character. The three steps represent the three evil attributes that are at the root of every sin a person will do. all a person's sins.

In making the three steps, Aharon also fulfilled the Torah's intention for having the three steps. The three steps that Aharon tread upon represented Aharon's complete mastery of the three evil traits that are at the root of every sin a person does. Through Aharon's perfect character, the Menorah fulfilled its mission. Having been lit by someone with perfect character, and knowledgeable in all aspects of the Torah's wisdom, the lights of the Menorah could radiate full the beauty of Torah wisdom to the Jewish nation. Its holy light penetrated the Jewish people's souls and brought them closer to Hashem through their greater understanding of the Torah.

What are these three evil traits that Aharon conquered? They are written in the Mishna in Pirkei Avot (4:21).

(כא) רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר הַקַּפָּר אָמַר, הַקְּנָאָה וְהַתְּאַוָּה וְהַכְּבוֹד מוֹצִיאִין אֶת הָאָדָם מִן הָעוֹלָם:

Rabbi Elazar HaKappar says: Jealousy, lust and the pursuit of honor take a person out of the world.

The commentaries explain this to mean that if one allows these weaknesses to take over his character, they will take him out of *this* world, and the World to Come.

As far as this world is concerned, his jealousy of others will prevent him from enjoying anything that he has. His pursuit of worldly pleasures will just frustrate him, because he will never achieve even half of what he seeks to have. And, the more he runs after honor, the farther away from honor he will get, for our Sages teach us that when one runs after honor, honor runs away from him.

As far as his portion in the next world is concerned, these three failings will bring him to transgress many sins in his efforts to satisfy his desires. These three selfish traits will also leave him devoid of any acts of kindness to others, leaving him totally destitute and lacking any good deeds.

Making the three steps leading up to the Menorah and stepping up on them, symbolized Aharon's mastery over these three negative attributes. Hence, the lesson that ***he did exactly as he was told without changing anything***, represents an amazing accomplishment on Aharon's part.

How do we know that Aharon mastered these three negative qualities? We can see it from Aharon's life, as recorded in the Torah.

When Hashem appeared to Moshe at the burning bush charging him to take the Jewish nation out of Egypt, Moshe argued with Hashem for a full week, not to go. His concern was for his older brother Aharon who led the Jewish people from the time their father Amram died. During those 80 years, Moshe was a virtual unknown. From his infancy he grew up in the King's palace, and shortly after he came out of the palace to seek his brothers' welfare, he had to run away to Midyan to escape a death sentence. During his time in Midyan, his older brother Aharon was the established prophet and leader of the people. How could he now, come out of the blue and usurp him?

Moshe only agreed after Hashem told him that not only will Aharon not be upset by you taking him over, he will actually rejoice at your having been chosen for the job. Knowing that Aharon would not be slighted or hurt in any way, Moshe acquiesced.

We see from here that Aharon did not have a shred of jealousy in him. After being the leader of the people for 80 years, he had no issue with his younger brother taking him over. Not only that, he sincerely rejoiced when he heard that Moshe was chosen to replace him.

The Midrash teaches us:

ואילו היה יודע אהרן שהקב"ה מכתוב עליו (שמות ד') הנה הוא יוצא לקראתך
וראך ושמח בליבו, בתופים ובמחולות היה יוצא לקראתו

Had Aharon known that Hashem was going to write in the Torah "and he will rejoice in his heart when he sees you" he would have gone out to greet him with drums and tambourines.

The explanation of this is that Aharon was so far removed from jealousy that it didn't even occur to him that anyone would suspect him

of being jealous of Moshe. But when he saw that Hashem wrote, “*and he will rejoice in his heart,*” to dispel any thoughts of jealousy from people’s minds, he realized that there was a need to let people know that he was not jealous. To that end, he would have come out to greet Moshe with drums and tambourines to show his sincere happiness for his brother.

How do we know that Aharon did not pursue honor?

The Torah reports that when Aharon died, the entire Jewish nation, men and women mourned his death. When Moshe died, the Torah doesn’t say that the whole nation mourned him. Why only Aharon?

Aharon was the consummate peace maker in the Jewish nation. He brought peace between two people who were in an argument, and between husband and wife. This is why the women also mourned his death. His presence would be sorely missed.

The Talmud teaches us:

מסכת כלה פרק שלישי

אם רבו שנים הוא משפיל רוחו והולך אצלם ומרצהו על זה וכן לזה שכך היתה
אומנותו של אהרן הצדיק

If two people were in an argument, Aharon would humble himself and go to them one at a time and bring peace between them for this was his specialty.

It goes on to explain how Aharon accomplished this. When he heard that two people had a fallout, he would go to one of them and greet him. The person would ask him, “Aharon the High Priest, what are you doing here?” Aharon would answer, “I was sent by your friend, (the one he had an argument with) to ask you forgiveness for what he did to

you. He feels very regretful.” In the presence of the holy Aharon, the person would respond, “Rebbe, I am the one who messed up, not him.” Aharon would then go to the other person and tell him the same thing. “Your friend sent me to ask you for forgiveness, he feels very regretful about the way he acted.” The next time these two people met, each would ask the other for forgiveness, and their friendship would return.

When Aharon heard that a husband and wife were arguing, he would go to the husband and extoll his wife’s, virtues convincing the husband that he could not find a better wife anywhere. His success rate is reflected in this passage.

תאנא שמונים אלף בחורים קרואים בשם אהרן יצאו אחרי מטתו אמאי
מרחמייתה ומאן דאיהדר ואיתעברה

We learned that 80,000 boys with the name Aharon escorted Aharon’s coffin after he died. Why were they all named Aharon? These are the first babies born to couples who Aharon helped stay together. In appreciation for what he did for them they named their next child Aharon.

Aharon’s humility helped so many, and when he died the *entire* Jewish nation, mourned his death.

How do we know that Aharon did not seek worldly pleasures?

The Talmud (*Horiot* 12a) reports:

תנו רבנן כשמן הטוב [וגו'] יורד על הזקן זקן אהרן וגו' כמין שני טפי מרגליות
היו תלויות לאהרן בזקנו אמר רב פפא תנא כשהוא מספר עולות ויושבות לו בעיקר
זקנו

The Rabbis taught. When Moshe anointed Aharon with the special anointing oil, two drops of oil - like pearls – clung forever to Aharon’s

beard. Rav Papa said, “When Aharon spoke, the two drops would ascend and lodge themselves at the roots of his beard (so as not to fall off from the movement of his mouth while talking).

The Talmud continues to say that Aharon was concerned that perhaps by accident he received personal benefit from the two drops of holy anointing oil in his beard. This would constitute a violation of the rules of the holy oil. Hashem consoled Aharon by telling him that he was not guilty of using the special oil for himself.

We see from Aharon’s concern that he was a person who did not want any part of something that was not permitted to him. Even the drops of oil on his beard, a clear miracle from Hashem to show that Aharon was the Divinely chosen High Priest, were a concern to him.

In summary, we see from all the above, that Aharon had perfected his character to the point where he did not have even the slightest amount of jealousy, haughtiness, or lust. Hence, when Aharon stepped up on the three steps to light the Menorah, he did not fall short (change) in any way of Hashem’s commandment to him. His perfect character coupled with his knowledge of the Torah as enhanced by the seven branches of wisdom that he knew, ensured that the Menorah was lit in the holiest way. This enabled Aharon to receive the maximum Torah light from the Menorah and radiate it to the Jewish people.

This also served as a lesson to the entire Jewish nation that the prerequisite to receiving the holy light of the Torah is, that one must have perfect character.

It is remarkable to note that this is something that we witness time and again about the great Sages of our times. They are all perfect in character; humble, not seeking pleasures in life, and not seeking the

honor that all who know them wish to bestow upon them. Their whole goal in life is to study the Torah and radiate its wisdom and advice to the Jewish people. Many books have been written about the recent Sages with story after story of how caring and compassionate they were.

This story illustrates the point.

A man came to the Satmar Rebbe, Harav Yoel Teitelbaum (1887-1979) requesting money to help him deal with many problems. He had no work, and was deeply in debt, his wife and children were sick and he himself had a terrible disease. Out of compassion for the man, the Rebbe gave him a substantial sum of money.

A short time later, someone told the Rebbe that the man was a charlatan. He made up all the problems and was a wealthy man who didn't need the money.

When the Rebbe heard this, he exclaimed, "You mean he doesn't have all those problems? Whew! I am so relieved!"