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Terumah: Create the Light

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It was an incredible structure filled with utensils meant to convey meaning and serve as the vehicle for our service of God. The *Mishkan* and its *keylim* (utensils) created the meeting place between Heaven and Earth, allowing us to feel the Divine presence within our midst each and every day.

And you shall make a menorah of pure gold. The menorah shall be made (tey'aseh) of hammered work; its base and its stem, its goblets, its knobs, and its flowers shall [all] be [one piece] with it.

(Exodus 25:31)

Rashi wonders, *why does the Torah say the Menorah "shall be made, tey'aseh" as opposed to "you shall make, ta'aseh"?* Rashi explains:

Since Moses found difficulty with it [i.e., figuring out how to form the menorah], the Holy One, blessed is He, said to him, "Cast the talent [equivalent to sixty-four pounds of gold] into the fire, and it will be made by itself."

Moshe couldn't figure out how to make the Menorah, so God tells him, "Throw the gold into the fire, and I (God) will create it. It will be made by Me." But what was so difficult? Moshe was able to figure out everything else in the *Mishkan*, why did this present a unique difficulty?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, 1902-1994) provides a beautiful insight. The Menorah was intended to create light, but not simply utilitarian light for the *Mishkan*; its light was to be the light of holiness which could illuminate an otherwise dark world. The Menorah symbolized man's sacred duty to create light through his dynamic spiritual activity. This light, in turn, drives away and dispels the darkness of evil and adversity. Our actions matter. When we do a mitzvah, perform an act of chessed, learn Torah, or daven with *kavana* (concentration), we create light and drive away the darkness. Moshe couldn't understand how the actions of an individual could impact the world. He didn't understand how a simple act could have a global effect. He didn't understand how the Menorah worked, and he was therefore, unable to construct it. Hashem tells him, *just throw the gold into the fire. You do your part, and I will do mine. You do what is within your ability to create goodness and holiness, and I will harness that energy to combat the evil in this world. You gather the gold (spiritual dynamic activity) and give it to me (throw into the fire), and I will create the mechanism through which the darkness is dispelled.* There are things in life you don't have to understand – you just have to believe.

There are many lessons to be gleaned from the Rebbe's words. We don't always understand how everything works; we just have to find the courage to believe it works. I don't know how my actions make a difference in the world, but I believe they do. I don't know how one isolated act of charity, kindness, or learning dispels the darkness, but it does. And knowing that it does is enough to spur me to action. But we are also taught that we don't have to go at it alone. Hashem tells us to take the gold of our dynamic spiritual endeavors and cast it into the holy fire of the Divine. God asks us to partner with Him. We put in the effort and deliver that effort into the hands of Hashem. The results will be luminescent.