



INSTITUTE FOR
JEWISH
CONTINUITY

Behaaloscha – Kindling New Perspective

Rabbi Shmuel Silber

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to Aaron and say to him: "When you light the lamps, the seven lamps shall cast their light toward the face of the menorah (Vayikra 8:1-2)"

Aharon was distressed. He felt left out and marginalized. The Tribal Princes brought beautiful and significant offerings to mark the dedication of the *Mizbeyach* (altar). Animals, gold, silver; incredible gifts of enormous value were brought to initiate this sacred space. But Aharon was not included. Neither he nor his tribe were part of this grand dedication. But God tells Aharon, "Do not despair; your lot is greater than theirs for I have given you (and your descendants) the mitzvah to kindle the Menorah." (Rashi 8:2) God is trying to soothe Aharon's sadness – but why the Menorah? How did this responsibility mend his broken heart? After all, Aharon as High Priest had many unique responsibilities. He brought the incense (*kitores*), he sacrificed the communal offerings and he was the only man allowed into the Holy of Holies (on Yom Kippur). What was the unique message and meaning of the *Menorah* that lifted Aharon's spirits?

The Midrash (Midrash Rabbah 15:8) provides a beautiful insight:

"There was a great king who often travelled to the small towns of his kingdom to meet his subjects. One of these journeys brought him to the town of his closet childhood friend. The king sent a message to his friend asking if he could join him in his home for a meal. The friend, a common farmer was excited for the great honor of hosting the king and began the frenetic preparations. The much-anticipated day arrived and the simple farmer had set the table with his finest dishes, and flatware. There were main dishes, side dishes and delicious deserts. The farmer looked at the table and was eager to greet the king. The trumpets sounded and the royal coach arrived. As the door of the carriage opened, the trumpets blasted again and a small army of attendants and servants entered the home of the farmer. The servants were dressed in the finest clothing and were carrying golden torches to light the way for their beloved king. Upon seeing all the pomp and wealth, the farmer became embarrassed of his meager possessions. The table that a few minutes earlier had looked so beautiful and regal now looked so simple and quaint. The farmer began to feel inadequate and unprepared. 'How can I serve the king on my simple dishes? How can I feed him my "commoner" food?' The farmer began to clear the table, quickly putting away the dishes before the king entered the home. Just as he finished, the king entered. 'Didn't you remember I was to join you for a meal?' the king asked as he looked at the empty table. 'Of course, your majesty, but as I saw the great display of wealth I thought it would be more fitting if we would dine on your dishes and have your cooks prepare the meal.' 'My dear friend,' the king remarked, 'I am here because I want to dine with you, in your home, at your table, with your food. I knew that whatever you would prepare would be with love and attention. I felt closer to you even before my arrival because I know how much effort you must be putting in to prepare for our short time together. We will not use my dishes, nor will my cooks prepare my favorite dishes. Tonight, I choose to dine with you, eat your food, and reside in your home.'

And so, it was with God. God created the luminaries, He forged the sun, the moon and stars and yet, He asked Aharon (and his descendants) to prepare the light, to kindle the Menorah and to illuminate His home."

The message is powerful. *Rachmana Liba Ba'Ey*, God desires heart. Aharon, felt left out because he didn't get to participate in the grand dedication. God explains: I don't need grandeur, just sincerity and consistency. Aharon, when you light the Menorah each day, I know that you will do it with a heart filled with love and dedication. I know you will kindle each lamp with the fire of sincerity and purity. I don't need your light, I want your light. I have the sun, the moon, and the stars, but when you kindle those little flames, they illuminate the entire celestial sphere. Your gift of light is the most precious gift I can receive.

The gifts of the tribal princes were beautiful and precious, but they are not representative of what God wants and expects of us on a daily basis. God wants us to kindle our Menorah. Do something which produces light in the world, even if it is just a small little flame. God doesn't demand spiritually heroic activity from us, He just asks for activity. But there is something else. Make sure to produce light each and every day. The Menorah was kindled every single day. This is the message of consistency. The tribal princes brought their offerings once; God wants us to create consistent light.

The Midrashic king only visited his childhood friend once. Our King looks to be with us each and every day. The words which comforted Aharon can provide us with the strength to move forward in life. We each have moments when we are like the Tribal Princes. Moments, when we do spiritually dramatic things, moments of sacrifice and selflessness, and spiritual heroism. But these are just moments. More important is to be like Aharon, kindle our Menorah of personal growth every day. We don't have to create a raging fire of accomplishment, just a small spark of goodness and holiness. We don't have to illuminate the entire world, just our own individual souls. We don't have to be perfect, but we must ascend and kindle each and every day.