

How to Ignite a Soul

Numbers, Chapter Eight

1. The L-rd spoke to Moses, saying:
2. Speak to Aaron and say to him: "When you light the lamps, toward the face of the menorah shall the seven lamps cast their light."
3. Aaron did so; towards the face of the menorah he lit its lamps, as the L-rd commanded Moses.
4. This is how the menorah was made: beaten from (a block) of gold, from its base to its flower it is beaten out (of a solid block); according to the vision that the L-rd had showed Moses, so he made the menorah.

When you light (*lit. cause to rise*)

Rashi

He is required to kindle the lamp until **the flame rises by itself, on its own accord**. Our Sages further expounded from here that there was a step in front of the menorah, on which the kohen stood to prepare the lamps.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

The spiritual significance of the mitzvah of lighting the menorah is that one should be a "lamplighter" who ignites that latent potential within "the soul of man, a lamp of G-d" (Proverbs 20:27).

The endeavor must be to kindle the lamp "so that a flame arises of its own accord." In teaching and influencing one's fellow, the objective should be to establish him or her as a self-sufficient luminary: to assist in developing his talents and abilities so that his lamp independently glows and, in turn, kindles the potential in others.

When the Kohen came to kindle the menorah's lamps each afternoon in the Holy Temple, he found them fully prepared for lighting: earlier in the day, the lamps had been cleaned and filled with oil, and fresh wicks had been inserted. All he had to do was bring near the flame he carried, so that its proximity to the waiting lamp would unleash the potential for illumination which the lamp already holds.

This is an important lesson to the spiritual lamplighter: do not think that you are achieving anything that your fellow could not achieve on his own; do not think that you are giving him something he does not already possess. The soul of your fellow is a ready lamp, filled with the purest oil and equipped with all that is required to convert its fuel into a blazing flame. It only lacks the proximity of another lamp to ignite it.

Toward the face of the menorah

Rashi

The three wicks on the rights and the three on the left were all directed toward the Menorah's central stem, thus concentrating the light toward the center. Because its light was not spread out, the Menorah symbolized that G-d, the Source of all light, did not need it to illuminate His tabernacle.

Sforno

The "right" symbolizes those who engage in spiritual pursuits, while the "left" symbolizes temporal activity. By having both sides of the Menorah give light toward its center, the Torah teaches that all of man's activities should be directed toward the service of G-d.



פרק ח

א. וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:

.. דַּבֵּר אֶל אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּהִעָלֹתְךָ

תֵּד אֶת הַנֵּרוֹת אֶל מוֹל פְּנֵי הַמְּנוֹרָה יֵאִירוּ שִׁבְעַת הַנֵּרוֹת:

ג. וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן אַהֲרֹן אֶל מוֹל פְּנֵי הַמְּנוֹרָה הִעָלָה נֵרֹתֶיהָ

כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה:

ד. וַיְזַה מִעֲשֵׂה הַמְּנוֹרָה מִקִּשְׁה זָהָב עַד יִרְכָּה עַד פְּרֻחָהּ

מִקִּשְׁה הוּא כְּמִרְאֵה אֲשֶׁר הִרְאָה ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה כֵּן עָשָׂה אֶת

הַמְּנוֹרָה:

And Aaron did so

Rashi

This shows Aaron's virtue that he did not deviate [from G-d's command].

Chassidic Masters

Aaron kindled the menorah the entire 40 years that the Tabernacle was in the wilderness. A person naturally does something the first time with more dedication and excitement than after he has done it for several years. But even after kindling the Menorah for many years, Aaron did so with the same dedication and excitement as the first time. (Likkutei Basar Likkutei)

Alternatively, Aaron was "a lover of peace and a pursuer of peace" (Ethics 1:12). An ordinary citizen is often affable and involved with people and their needs. However, a person who is appointed to a high office may become distant or conceited. Aaron's greatness is that even when he became High Priest, he still remained the same. (R' Meir MiPremishlan)

Beaten

Rashi

There was a lump of gold which he beat with a hammer and cut with shears to extend its limbs properly; but it was not made limb by limb and then connected.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

The menorah represents the people of Israel -- G-d's "light unto the nations." Its many components attest to the fact that the Jewish nation is comprised of different tribes and includes individuals from all walks of life. The menorah was hammered out of a single piece of gold, originating as a single object and remaining a single object through the various stages of its construction to the finished product. This represents the fact that while there are nations that are a coalition of variant groups, each formed by its own ancestry and experience but welded together by common interest and habitat, this is not the case with the Jewish people: all souls of Israel are of a single essence, and their division into distinct individuals is merely their investment into different bodies and physical lives.

Yet, the seven lamps must all be turned toward the central stem. Although the soul of Israel shines by means of a seven-lamp menorah representing the various prototypes of human character (the seven sefirot), at the same time, we are all oriented toward the same goal. The differences are only in order to better express our Source and to more completely achieve our goal, which makes them not differences, but the ultimate expression of oneness.

SUMMARY

- The spiritual significance of menorah is: be a lamplighter.
- "Until the flame rises on its own accord" = help another become a self-sufficient luminary.
- Uplifting another, uplifts you = the kohen stood on raised steps.
- Menorah had many components = the diversity of Jewish people.
- Menorah was made from a single piece of gold = all souls are essentially one.
- All the wicks faced the center = we may all be unique, but we have one central goal.

