

## A Pound Of Candles

In his youth, the famed Maggid of Zlotchov, Rabbi Yechiel Michel, lived in a certain town, where he would sit all day in the local Beit Midrash (study hall and synagogue) and pursue his studies. In that town there lived a simple Jew who earned his livelihood by transporting travellers and merchandise in his wagon. One day, the wagon driver came to the local rabbi in a state of great distress. "Help me, Rebbe!" he wept. "I have committed a terrible sin. I have desecrated the holy Shabbat. How can I atone for my transgression?" "How did this come to pass?" asked the Rabbi. "Last Friday," the man explained, "I was returning from the marketplace with a wagon-load of merchandise when I lost my way in the forest. By the time I found my way to the outskirts of the city, the sun had already set. So preoccupied was I with my worry over the merchandise, that I failed to realize that the Shabbat had arrived until it was too late..." Seeing how broken-hearted the man was, the rabbi comforted him and said: "My son, the gates of repentance are never closed. Donate a pound of candles to the synagogue and your transgression will be forgiven." The young prodigy, Rabbi Michel, overheard this exchange, and was displeased by the rabbi's approach. "A pound of candles to atone for violating the Shabbat?" he thought to himself. "The Shabbat is one of the most important mitzvot of the Torah. Why is the rabbi treating the matter so Lightly?" That Friday afternoon, the wagon driver brought the candles to the synagogue. As Rabbi Michel watched disapprovingly from his table against the back wall, he placed them on the lectern for the synagogue beadle to light in honour of the Shabbat. But this was not to be. Before the beadle arrived, a stray dog carried off the candles and ate them. The distraught penitent ran to report the incident to the rabbi. "Woe is me!" he wept. "My repentance has been rejected in Heaven! What shall I do?!" "You're making too much of the matter," the rabbi reassured him. "These things happen -- there's no reason to deduce that G-d is rejecting your repentance. Bring another pound of candles to the

synagogue next week, and everything will be alright." But when the beadle lit the candles on the following Friday afternoon, they inexplicably melted down, so that by the time Shabbat commenced, nothing was left of them. And upon his third attempt on the week after that, a strong wind suddenly blow out the candles just when Shabbat began and it was not possible to relight them. The rabbi, too, realized, that something was amiss, and advised the wagon driver to seek the counsel of the great Chassidic master, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov. "Hmm..." said the Baal Shem Tov, upon hearing the man's story. "It seems that a certain young scholar in your town finds fault with the path to repentance that the rabbi has prescribed for you. Never mind. Next week, donate another pound of candles to the synagogue. This time, I promise you that everything will be alright. And tell Rabbi Michel that I would be honoured if he could trouble himself to come visit me." Rabbi Michel wasted no time in abiding by the Baal Shem Tov's request. But no sooner had he and his coachman set out that all sorts of troubles beset their journey. First, the wagon tumbled into a ditch. Then, an axle broke many miles from the nearest town. After which they lost their way altogether. When they finally found the road to Mezhibuzh it was late Friday afternoon and the sun was about to set. They were forced to abandon the wagon and continue on foot. Rabbi Michel arrived at the Baal Shem Tov's door an hour into Shabbat, weary and traumatized by his near-violation of the holy day. "Good Shabbat, Reb Michel," Rabbi Israel greeted him, "come in and warm yourself by the fire. You, Reb Michel, have never tasted sin, so you did not comprehend the remorse a Jew feels at having transgressed the will of his Father in Heaven. I trust that you now understand something of the agony that our friend experienced. Believe me, his remorse alone more than atoned for his unwitting transgression..." (From Rabbi S.Y Zevin's *SippureiChassidim*; translation/adaptation by Yanki Tauber) - *chabad.org*

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Be'haalos'cha 5769 - הבעלותך תשס"ט

מס' ש"ז

...אל מול פני המנורה... (ח'ב')

...Towards the face of the menorah...(8:2)

Rashi explains that this Posuk was referring to the centre of the menorah; to the middle lamp. This is supported by the words themselves as the Birchas Peretz points out that the gematria (numerical value) of the phrase "El mul p'nei hamenorah" equates to that of "towards the middle."

The Maharal asks on this explanation of Rashi, the menorah was a candelabrum with six lamps, and thus there was no middle? How could the lights have pointed towards a middle that did not exist? The Maharal goes on to answer that it is from here that we learn that there was a seventh light in the centre of the menorah. However, he continues further with his answer. The posuk did not state that the lights pointed towards the middle, but rather towards the 'face' of the menorah. As a three-dimensional object, the menorah invariably had six faces. This is useful as the Maharal adds that the menorah was also lit 'from the face.' The Maharal continues that collectively the faces of the menorah that point in each direction also point towards the middle or the centre of the three-dimensional object i.e. the menorah.

I heard from Rabbi D Rowe that everything in creation exists in three dimensions and therefore has six faces. The seventh is always the greater essence, be that in people and directions, the six working days of the week and the

seventh as Shabbos, the Shemitta cycle or anything else. The same is true for the menorah.

This seventh direction is the centre, the essence of the entity; and this entity is always greater than the sum of the parts that form it. Hashem fashioned the menorah from a singular piece of gold. Like everything else in creation it was three-dimensional. However, as it had only six directions and six lamps, the seventh (which was the essence) was still missing. Only once Aaron had lit all six of the lamps, could the seventh actually come into being. Without his input, the menorah was merely a beautiful golden candelabrum; a stunning yet shallow face that lacked in depth or essence. A proof for this would be the fact that the word used in the posuk to mean 'light' is not the literal word in Hebrew (hadlick) and is instead beha'losecha which is from the route ayin-lamed-heh meaning raise up or ascend.

The same is true with the whole of creation. Everything has six sides, but the responsibility of empowering that seventh face that it potentially possesses, resides in humanity and not Hashem. Through d'veikus b'Hashem we can achieve this depth and give life to that seventh face, the essence of everything in the world. This elevation also raises its' value above that of the sum of the parts contained within it. Thus even a single mitzvah has the power to raise all of creation and, just as the menorah did, illuminate the entire world.

By Tony Cohen

## Aharon

ויעש כן אהרון אל מול פני המנורה העלה נרותיה כאשר צוה ה' את משה (ח:ג.)

Aaron did so, towards the body of the menorah did he light it's lamps, as Hashem commanded Moshe ( 8:3)

Rashi comments that the Torah praises Aharon for not deviating. Rabbi Meir of Premishlan asks: Why is this so praiseworthy that it deserves mention. Why would Aharon even consider deviating from Hashem's instruction in lighting the menorah?

Rabbi Meir explains that the Midrash says that Aharon was a man of the people, who mingled and visited them in their tents. If he found out that there was a disagreement between two Jews, he would not rest until he had restored harmony between them. If he came across someone who was ignorant and did not know how to pray, he was willing to spend time and teach him the Aleph Beis. Although Aharon and Moshe were on a similar level of spirituality, Aharon's profound humility enabled him to understand and sympathise with the average Jew.

In our Parshah we see that Aharon was elevated to a new height. He was honoured and entrusted with the most beautiful service of the Mishkan, kindling the flame of the menorah. Rashi notes that when Aharon found out that the leaders of all the tribes had participated in the consecration of the Mishkan, whereas he and his tribe of Levi had not been assigned anything, his spirits fell. Hashem then spoke to him saying, "*Your participation is superior to theirs because you will light the menorah.*" The Midrash comments that G-d said to Aharon "The offerings of the other tribal leaders are only for the present, whereas your service, the kindling of the menorah will endure forever." We see this idea by

the fact that even in the absence of the Mishkan, we still light Shabbos and Chanukah candles many generations later.

A person of lesser character than Aharon, after having been elevated to a respectful position in society, would have undergone a change in behaviour, if not in personality. He is likely to remain in his chambers and may be approachable only by appointment. It would not be expected of the Cohen Gadol to circulate among the common folk to solve their petty disputes or to teach the basics of torah to illiterates. But this was Aharon, whose greatness was equalled only by his humility. Being elevated to the most exalted office of the nation did not affect his humility in the least.

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan states that this is what Rashi meant when he commented that the Torah praises Aharon for "not deviating." Aharon did not deviate from his previous practices and customary behaviour even after he was installed as the Cohen Gadol. The one who entered the inner chambers of the Mishkan to kindle the menorah remained unchanged. Honour and fame did not influence him to consider himself superior to others. This is the measure of true greatness.

Adapted from 'Living each Week', By Rabbi Twerski

By Asher Weisz

## Secret Security

In this week's Parasha Ba'alosecha several pesukim are dedicated to the precise description as to how the Bnei Yisroel would move during their time in the desert. When the Clouds of Glory would rise from the Mishkan they would have to travel and when the Cloud of Glory would descend they would have to rest.

The Ramban points out that this is all mentioned to show the great praise of the Jewish people. They would sometimes be stuck in an uninhabitable part of the desert for several months on end without any sign of Hashem telling them to move on. On another occasion they would reach an oasis in the desert and only stay there for a short period of time. This shows the Bnei Yisroel's unshakable trust in Hashem. Uncomfortable or not they went when Hashem told them to.

The Or HaChaim says further how much the Bnei Yisroel were completely reliant on Hashem. He says that they did not know when or for how long each period of travel or rest would be for. They would arrive somewhere, get settled and unpack the Mishkan only to find out the following morning that they had another three month journey ahead of them. They had no itiner-

ary, no warning and no idea of what the future would hold.

He says that the Bnei Yisroel were on such a high level that they had no concern what so ever about their own needs. The possuk says "By the word of Hashem they travelled and by the word of Hashem they camped." The Or HaChaim says that the Bnei Yisroel went with the same enthusiasm every single time they had to travel or stop. They did not care whether the place they were staying was habitable or not. They did not care that they would be travelling again after only a short break. What Hashem said they did regardless of anything else. It takes a complete negation of oneself to the will of Hashem to reach a level of unquestioning obedience to the seemingly illogical and inconvenient will of Hashem.

We take for granted all the physical security which we Baruch Hashem have nowadays, but we should always keep in mind, we only have such security because Hashem allows it and we cannot imagine what level the Bnei Yisroel must have been on to act as they did.

By Aharon Goldwater

### Riddle of the Week

Which 60 men slept in King Shaul's bed room?

(Answer in next week's Living Torah)

### Answer to Last Weeks Riddle

What mitzvah can one only do whilst standing?

Standing for ones elders and parents

If you have a riddle or Jewish joke you would like to share with the living torah readers, please email us at:

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