



## “Your Contribution Is Greater than Theirs”

# With the Lighting of the Menorah Aharon HaKohen Inculcated the Yirah of Reverence Ultimately the Flame Ascended Spontaneously Affording Yisrael Ahavah of Hashem Also

The parsha we read this week is parshas Beha'aloscha. Hence, it is fitting for us to explore the mitzvah of the kindling of the Menorah, which HKB”H commanded Moshe Rabeinu to deliver to Aharon HaKohen (Bamidbar 8, 1):

“וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר, דבר אל אהרן ואמרת אליו בהעלותך את הנרות אל מול פני המנורה יאירו שבעת הנרות, ויעש כן אהרן אל מול פני המנורה העלה נרותיה כאשר צוה ה' את משה.”

Hashem spoke to Moshe saying, “Speak to Aharon and say to him: ‘When you kindle the lamps, toward the face of the menorah shall the seven lamps cast light.’” Aharon did so; toward the face of the Menorah, he kindled its lamps, as Hashem had commanded Moshe. Rashi asks: **Why does the Torah juxtapose the passage of the Menorah with the passage describing the contributions of the “nesiim”** (the princes of the shevatim)? **Because when Aharon saw the inauguration of the “nesiim,” he was disheartened, for he did not participate with them in the inauguration—neither he nor his tribe. HKBH said to him: “I swear by your life! Your contribution is greater than theirs, for you will kindle and prepare the Menorah’s lamps.”**

Imagine the scenario. All twelve nesiim commemorated the inauguration of the Mishkan by bringing lavish korbanos with silver and gold vessels. Meanwhile, Aharon stood by idly on the side without participating in all the pomp and circumstance. The fact that he and his tribe did not participate with the nesiim in this ceremony caused him to feel downhearted and despondent. We are forced to conclude

that this was HKB”H’s grand plan. For, HKB”H had set aside the service of the kindling of the Menorah especially for him—a ceremony that was to be more significant than the korbanos of the nesiim. Hence, it behooves us to explain the connection between these two services. Additionally, in what way is the service of the kindling of the Menorah greater than the service of the korbanos of the nesiim?

Furthermore, we need to examine Rashi’s comment: **“בהעלותך”—when you kindle** (literally, “raise”): **Because the flame rises, Scripture employs the term “kindling”; it is an expression implying “rising.” For, one must kindle until the flame rises by itself.** The same message is conveyed in parshas Tetzaveh (Shemos 27, 20): **“ואתה תצוה את בני ישראל ויקחו אליך שמן זית זך כתית למאור להעלות נר ותמיד—and you shall command Bnei Yisrael that they shall bring you clear olive oil, crushed for illumination, to keep the lamp burning continuously.** Here Rashi comments: **He would kindle the fire of the Menorah until the fire would rise on its own.** We intend to explore the significance of this phenomenon—the flame rising on its own.

### Facing the Center of the Menorah Combining Torah and Yiras Shamayim

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by introducing an explanation from the Chasam Sofer in Toras Moshe (Beha'aloscha) related to the command: **“Toward the face of the menorah shall the seven lamps cast light”—**

that all six lamps, the three on the right and the three on the left, must all face the central lamp. Now, there is a well-known teaching in the Gemara (B.B. 25b): **“הרוצה שיחכים ידרים”** **“One who wants to become wise should face south** (Rashi: He should face south while praying), **while one who wants to become wealthy should face north** (he should face north while praying); **and your mnemonic is: The Shulchan stood in the north, while the Menorah stood in the south.**

The Gemara explains that this does not mean that a person should face south directly while davening. After all, a person is supposed to face east toward Yerushalayim and toward the site of the Mikdash. Instead, it means that he should turn slightly to the south, in the direction of the Menorah, which was located on the southern side of the Mikdash. We learn from this that the kindling of the Menorah symbolizes the light of the Torah, as it is written (Mishlei 6, 26): **“כי נר מצוה”** **—for a mitzvah is a lamp and the Torah is light.**

Let us introduce another pertinent elucidation from the Gemara (Shabbas 31a): **“מאי דכתיב והיה אמונת עתיך חוסן ישועות”** **חכמת ודעת יראת ה' היא אוצרו, אמונת זה סדר זרעים, עתיך זה סדר מועד, חוסן זה סדר נשים, ישועות זה סדר נזיקין, חכמת זה סדר קדשים, ודעת סדר.** The Gemara inquires: **What is the significance of that which is written** (Yeshayah 33, 6): **“The faith of your times will be the strength of your salvations, wisdom, and knowledge; fear of Hashem, that is man’s treasure”?** It answers that the six words: **“אמונת עתיך חוסן ישועות חכמת ודעת”**—allude to the six orders of the Mishnah, which are the foundation of all of Torah she’b’al peh. Nevertheless: **“ואפילו הכי יראת ה' היא אוצרו”**—**fear of Hashem is man’s one true treasure.** Rashi explains that **“yiras Hashem”** is essential for remembering the Torah one has learned and retaining it in the storehouse of one’s mind. In other words, **“yiras Shamayim”** is the essential ingredient necessary for retaining and perpetuating all of Torah she’b’al peh, encompassing the six orders of the Mishnah.

Based on this premise, the Chasam Sofer asserts that the six branches coming off the central column of the Menorah on both sides allude to the six orders of Torah she’b’al peh: **Zeraim, Moed, Nashim, Nezikin, Kodshim and Taharos.** The central column and lamp, which forms the body of the Menorah, alludes to **“yiras Shamayim”**—fear and reverence of

G-d. It is the central and essential ingredient that sustains and perpetuates the entire Torah. That is the meaning of the words: **“Fear of Hashem, that is man’s treasure.”** Hence, the command: **“Toward the face of the menorah shall the seven lamps cast light”**—emphasizes a vital principle; the study of Torah she’b’al peh is only effective if it is associated with **“yiras Shamayim.”**

### Extolling the Virtue of Aharon Who Never Deviated

In this manner, he interprets the meaning of the passuk: **“ויעש כן אהרן אל מול פני המנורה העלה נרותיה כאשר צוה ה' את משה”**—**Aharon did so; toward the face of the Menorah, he kindled its lamps, as Hashem had commanded Moshe.** Citing the Sifrei, Rashi comments: **“להגיד שבחו של אהרן שלא שינה”**—**to avow the praise of Aharon—that he did not deviate.** The commentaries find this perplexing. It is inconceivable that Aharon would not have done so; he would not have deviated, chas v’shalom, from what Hashem had commanded him to do. So, why does the Torah find it necessary to attest to the fact that **“Aharon did so”?**

Let us provide an explanation based on our current discussion. Note that when HKB”H issues the command, He says: **“Toward the face of the Menorah shall the seven lamps cast light”**—insinuating that they should cast light on their own without any action or procedure. Whereas, when Aharon kindles the Menorah, it says: **“Toward the face of the Menorah he kindled its lamps”**—suggesting that he performed some action to rotate or tilt the lamps toward the central lamp.

The Chasam Sofer teaches us that if the kohen kindling the Menorah was exceedingly reverent, he did not have to perform any action to tilt the lamps toward the central lamp. In the merit of his **“yiras Shamayim,”** all of the lamps faced the central lamp on their own. For, as we have learned, the central lamp symbolized **“yiras Shamayim.”** If, however, the kohen was not exceedingly reverent, he had to manually adjust the lamps to face the central lamp. This explains beautifully the words HKB”H addresses to Aharon, who was exceedingly reverent: **“When you kindle the lamps, toward the face of the menorah shall the seven lamps cast light.”** In other words, because of your high degree of **“yiras Shamayim,”** they will cast their light toward the central lamp on their own.

Aharon, however, was extremely humble. He did not want to deviate from the procedure performed by the other kohanim, whose “yiras Shamayim” was not commensurate with his; they had to manually turn the lamps. Therefore, due to his immense kedushah: **“Aharon did so”**—he turned the lamps manually: **“Toward the face of the Menorah he kindled its lamps.”** This is the message conveyed by Rashi’s comment: **To avow the praise of Aharon—that he did not deviate**—he performed the kindling just like the other kohanim did, manually turning the lamps, even though he did not have to. This is his sacred explanation.

### The First Letters of “אֵת הַנְּרוֹת בַּיַּן הָעֶרְבִים” Spell אהב”ה

I would like to propose a fascinating interpretation of HKB”H’s directive to Aharon: **“When you kindle the lamps”** and Rashi’s comment: **You must kindle it so that the flame rises by itself.** Let us introduce an important concept from the Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 10): **“אורייתא בלא דחילו ורחימו לא פרחת לעילא—Torah without fear and love does not ascend upwards.** Furthermore (ibid.): **“תורה ומצוה בלא דחילו ורחימו יהי—Torah and mitzvos without fear and love cannot go and present themselves to G-d.** In other words, “yirah” and “ahavah” are like two wings that elevate our Torah and mitzvos to the heavens.

Based on this premise, the Tiferes Shlomo (Moadim) explains the formula of the Berachos instituted by the sages to be recited in association with all of the mitzvos: **“אשר קדשנו במצוותיו—Who sanctified us with His mitzvos.** Here are his enlightening words: **How is it appropriate to employ the plural tense when reciting the berachah for a single mitzvah? However, every individual mitzvah that a person performs must be performed with reverence and love; they constitute two mitzvos asei—“ahavah” and “yirah.” Thus, every individual mitzvah carries with it the two mitzvos of “yirah” and “ahavah,” as explained. Thus, it is appropriate to recite the formula “His mitzvos” in the plural.**

Let us now apply this concept to the explanation of the Chasam Sofer above concerning the kindling of the Menorah. He taught us that Aharon was able to draw “yiras Hashem” from the center lamp. Now, we have just learned that “yirah” is only one of the wings that transports our prayers and

mitzvos heavenwards. Two wings are required, however; the wing of “ahavah” must also be present for the mitzvos to be represented completely. Clearly, then, Aharon must have performed the kindling of the Menorah with both “yiras Hashem” and “Ahavas Hashem.” So, where is the element of “ahavah” alluded to in the performance of the mitzvah of the kindling of the Menorah?

To answer this question, we will refer to a passuk in parshas Tetzaveh (Shemos 30, 8): **“וּבַהֲעֹלוֹת אַהֲרֹן אֶת הַנְּרוֹת בַּיַּן הָעֶרְבִים יִקְטִירֵנָה קְטוֹרֶת תָּמִיד לִפְנֵי ה' לְדֹרוֹתֵיכֶם”**—and when Aharon kindles the lamps in the afternoon, he shall bring it up in smoke, continual incense before Hashem, for your generations. In Sha’ar HaPesukim, our master, the Arizal, notes that **the first letters of the words אֵת הַנְּרוֹת בַּיַּן הָעֶרְבִים spell the word אהב”ה**, indicating that a kohen is rooted in **“chesed,” which is tantamount to “ahavah.”** Thus, we learn from the Arizal that Aharon HaKohen kindled the Menorah with the intent of inspiring and imbuing the neshamos of Yisrael with “Ahavas Hashem.”

We can now combine these two ideas. Aharon was commanded to kindle the six side lamps of the Menorah, so that they would face the central lamp; this was designed to inculcate in Yisrael “yiras Hashem.” Hence, the service of the kindling of the Menorah was designed to inspire and inculcate in Yisrael both “yiras Hashem” and “Ahavas Hashem.” We have learned where the “yiras Hashem” came from; we must now endeavor to explain which part of the kindling ceremony was designed to impart “Ahavas Hashem” to Yisrael.

### A Person Must Strive to Attain “Yiras Shamayim” Then “Ahavas Hashem” Will Follow as a Gift

I would like to propose an explanation based on a fundamental principle gleaned from the sacred teachings of the Maggid Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezritsch, zy”a; it is brought down by his disciple in the Kedushas Levi (Likutei Shas, Shabbas 77b). A person’s main focus must be to achieve “yiras Hashem.” As a result, he will be granted “Ahavas Hashem” as a gift from above. Here are his sacred words:

**The basis and foundation for serving the Almighty is to revere Him and love Him. “Yirah” always precedes “ahavah.” One must first be in awe of His splendor and**



excellence. My holy mentor, Rabbi Dov Ber, said that a person must strive to attain “yiras Shamayim.” Then, “ahavah” will come automatically. Having purified himself to fear and revere Hashem, he will also merit loving the Blessed One.

He of blessed memory said that this is consistent with Chazal’s statement (Kiddushin 2b): “It is a man’s nature to pursue a woman,” since a woman is designed for “yirah,” in keeping with the passuk (Mishlei 31, 30): “A woman who fears Hashem.” Whereas a man is designed for “ahavah.” Hence, it is man’s nature to pursue a woman, namely someone who truly reveres Hashem. Thus, he also achieves the midah of “ahavah,” and “Ahavas Hashem” follows automatically.

After reviewing a compilation of the teachings of the Maggid of Mezritsch in Ohr Torah (Eikev), it is apparent that he is attempting to reconcile an elucidation in the Gemara (Berachos 33b) regarding the passuk (Devarim 10, 12): “ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך כי אם ליראה, וטו יראת שמים מילתא זוטרתא היא, והאמר רבי חנינא משום רבי שמעון בן יוחי אין לו להקב"ה בבית גזיו אלא אוצר של יראת שמים, שנאמר יראת ה' היא אוצרו, אין לגבי משה מילתא זוטרתא היא.” The passuk says: “**And now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you but to fear Hashem, your G-d . . .**” Is “yiras Shamayim” such a simple (small) matter? Didn’t Rabbi Chanina say in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: HKB”H has nothing in his treasury other than a treasure of “yiras Shamayim,” as it is stated (Yeshayah 33, 6): “**The fear of Hashem that is his treasure.**” Yes, indeed! For Moshe, it is a simple matter.

On the surface, this is perplexing. After all, the passuk does not only mention “yirah”; it also mentions “ahavah”: “ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך כי אם ליראה את ה' אלקיך ללכת.” And now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you but to fear (“yirah”) Hashem, your G-d, to adopt His ways and to love (“ahavah”) Him. That being the case, how can we make sense of the Gemara’s answer that indeed “yirah” is a simple matter for Moshe? After all, the passuk also mentions “ahavah,” which is no small thing to be taken for granted. Hence, the Maggid of Mezritsch explains that all HKB”H requests of Yisrael is to strive to acquire the quality of “yiras Hashem”; by doing so, they will acquire the quality of “Ahavas Hashem” as a gift.

## The Middle Branch Is the “Yirah” of Reverence the Flame that Rises by Itself is “Ahavas Hashem”

In this manner, we can identify where in the service of the kindling of the Menorah we find the magnificent combination of “yiras Hashem” and “Ahavas Hashem.” Let us refer to the passuk (Shir HaShirim 8, 6): “שימני כחותם על לבך כחותם על זרועך: כי עזה כמות אהבה קשה כשואל קנאה רשפיה רשפי אש שלהבת יה—place me like a seal on Your heart, like a seal to dedicate Your strength for me, for strong until death is my love; though their zeal for vengeance is hard as the grave, its flashes are flashes of fire, the flame of G-d.” In his commentary on Shir HaShirim, the Gra writes that the “flashes of fire” (burning coals) refers to those who possess “yirah”; “the flame of G-d” refers to those who possess “ahavah.”

The actual kindling of the lamps so that they faced the central lamp alludes to “fear of Hashem, that is man’s treasure”; that maneuver drew “yiras Shamayim” from the central lamp. The additional directive: “When you kindle the lamps”—which according to Rashi means to kindle them in such a way that the flame rises by itself—alludes to drawing “Ahavas Shamayim”—referred to as “the flame of G-d.” As explained, if a person toils and strives to attain “yiras Hashem,” analogous to “flashes of fire,” he ultimately merits having the flame of “Ahavas Hashem” rise by itself spontaneously as a gift.

Concerning the wonderful chiddush of the Maggid of Mezritsch, zy”a, it behooves us to add an important point. If “Ahavas Hashem” is granted as a heavenly gift, why does the Torah bother to mention the mitzvas asei of striving to love Hashem at all? We are referring to the passuk in the first paragraph of Krias Shema (Devarim 6, 4): “ואהבת את ה' אלקיך: בכל לבבך—you shall love Hashem your G-d with all your heart. Since there is a mitzvas asei to fear and revere Hashem (ibid. 13): “את ה' אלקיך תירא—you shall revere Hashem your G-d—if a person strives to attain “yiras Hashem,” “Ahavas Hashem” will follow automatically; hence, there is no need to command it.

It appears that we can reconcile this difficulty based on a teaching from the author of the Tanya, who was one of the distinguished disciples of the Maggid of Mezritsch, zy”a. In Igeres HaKodesh (Chapter 18), he explains that when the

Maggid said that one who strives to attain “yiras Hashem” receives “Ahavas Hashem” as a gift, he was referring specifically to one who has achieved the higher form of “yirah”—“yiras haromemut”—reverence and awe of Hashem, not merely fear of punishment. This form of “yirah” indicates that one recognizes Hashem’s greatness and supremacy. Such a person merits the great “ahavah” to delight in the service of Hashem. Indeed, the lesser form of “yirah,” the fear of punishment is important, because it prevents a person from committing aveiros. Nevertheless, it does not have the power to grant “Ahavas Hashem” as a gift. A person who only has this form of “yirah” must still strive to develop some modicum of “Ahavas Hashem.” He loves Hashem, because Hashem gives him life and provides him with sustenance. Yet, if he progresses to achieve the level of “yiras haromemut,” he will then receive the higher level of “ahavah” as a gift.

This agrees very nicely with what we have explained. HKB”H said to Aharon: **“When you kindle the lamps, toward the face of the Menorah shall the seven lamps cast light.”** Two commands were inherent in this statement. Firstly, all the lamps were to face the center lamp symbolizing “yiras Shamayim.” This act was designed to inculcate in Yisrael reverence and awe of the Almighty—“yiras haromemut”—recognizing His greatness and supremacy. Of course, this was in addition to the fear of punishment endowed by the nesiim. Secondly, **“when you kindle the lamps,”** kindle them so that the flame rises by itself. Due to their exalted level of “yirah,” they will receive the flame of “ahavah” as a gift—the “ahavah” to delight in the service of Hashem.

### During the Inauguration of the Mizbeiach the Nesiim Endowed Every Member of Yisrael with the “Yirah” of Punishment

Following this line of reasoning, we will now explain how HKB”H consoled Aharon HaKohen. Because he was distraught that he did not participate in the korbanos offered by the nesiim, HKB”H said to him: **“Your contribution is greater than theirs, for you will kindle and prepare the Menorah’s lamps.”** Let us recall the explanation of the Ramban (Vayikra 1, 9) concerning a korban’s mechanism of atonement. When offering the korban, the sinner must imagine that everything being done to the sacrificial animal should have deservedly

been done to him. **While doing all of these things, the person should recognize that he has sinned against his G-d in body and soul, and it would have been fitting for his blood to have been spilled and his body to have been burned—were it not for the chesed of the Creator, Who accepted a substitute from him. The korban provides atonement by providing its blood in place of his blood, its life in place of his life and the sacrificial animal’s major limbs in place of his major limbs.**

The Divrei Yechezkel and the Ben Ish Chai apply this principle to the following passuk (Vayikra 1, 2): **“אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן לה”**—**when a person from among you will bring a korban to Hashem.** They interpret the term **מכם** as an acronym for **מִדָּה כְּנִגְד מִדָּה**—**measure for measure.** This allusion teaches us that this person should think that he rightfully deserves everything that is being done to the korban “measure for measure.” For sinning against Hashem with the life Hashem gave him, which is supported and carried by his blood, the blood of the korban is being spilled.

This suggests that the purpose of the ceremony of the nesiim—inaugurating the mizbeiach with their korbanos—was to endow Yisrael with the “yirah” of punishment. After every sin, they should recognize that they truly deserved to be the actual korban being sacrificed on the altar. In His infinite mercy and kindness, however, HKB”H allowed them to offer a sacrificial animal as a substitute. Notwithstanding, the ultimate goal in the service of Hashem is for every Jew to achieve the higher level of “yirah”—“yiras haromemut.”

Of course, not every individual is capable of achieving this exalted level. Therefore, it is preferable that they at least possess the lower level of “yirah”—the fear of punishment. This will at least prevent them from committing aveiros. This is evident from a passage in parshas Vaeschanan. Fearing that they would die, the people of Yisrael requested that Moshe convey the words of HKB”H to them rather than HKB”H Himself. HKB”H acquiesced and said (Devarim 5, 25): **“היטיבו כל אשר דיברו, מי יתן והיה לבכם זה להם ליראה אותי ולשמור את כל מצוותי.”** **Everything they said has merit. I wish that they would retain their present attitude to fear Me and to observe all My mitzvos always; so that they and their children will benefit forever.**

**“Your Contribution Is Greater than Theirs”**

We can now appreciate why HKB”H arranged for Aharon and shevet Levi not to participate in the inauguration ceremony of the nesiim. After all, every Jew should yearn to rise to serve Hashem not only with the “yirah” of punishment but also with “yiras haromemut”—recognizing that He is the supreme master and ruler. Furthermore, with the fear of punishment alone, it is impossible to elevate the korbanos heavenwards to provide Hashem with a pleasing, satisfying fragrance. For, as we have learned, Torah and mitzvos lacking reverence and love cannot ascend heavenwards.

Therefore, HKB”H assigned Aharon HaKohen the special, sacred service of kindling the Menorah: **“בהעלותך את הנרות אל מול פני המנורה יאירו שבעת הנרות”**. By performing this service, he imparted to Yisrael the wonderful combination of “yiras haromemut” and “Ahavas Hashem.” He conferred the former upon them by kindling the lamps to face the central lamp—the lamp symbolizing “yiras Hashem.” He conferred the latter upon them by ensuring that the flame rose by itself. Thus, they enjoyed “Ahavas Hashem” as a gift, like a **divine flame**.

This provides us with a very nice interpretation of the words HKB”H addresses to Aharon: **“בהעלותך את הנרות—when you kindle the lamps.** From the passuk cited above, we

know that mitzvos are compared to candles: **“כי נר מצוה ותורה אור—for a mitzvah is a lamp and the Torah is light.** As we have learned, to ascend to Hashem in the heavens, they must be transported by the wings of “yirah” and “ahavah.” Therefore, HKB”H instructed Aharon: **“When you kindle the lamps”—if you want Yisrael’s mitzvos to ascend to Hashem and provide a pleasing fragrance; “toward the face of the Menorah shall the seven lamps cast light”—to endow them with both “yiras haromemut” and “Ahavas Hashem.”**

This then is the message conveyed by Rashi’s comment: **“בהעלותך—when you kindle** (literally, “raise”): **Because the flame rises, Scripture employs the term “kindling”; it is an expression implying “rising.” For, one must kindle until the flame rises by itself.** By combining the two wings—“ahavah” and “yirah”—the mitzvos are able to rise to the heavens and serve as a pleasing fragrance for Hashem. This then was the consolation HKB”H offered Aharon to ease his mind: **“Your contribution is greater than theirs!”** The nesiim only endowed Yisrael with the lesser form of “yirah”—the fear of punishment; in addition to that form of “yirah,” you also endowed them with “yiras haromemut” and “Ahavas Hashem.” With those two elegant wings, their Torah and mitzvos are transported heavenwards.

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