

# THE MENORAH: IGNITING THE SOUL OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

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## YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Behaaloscha

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

**Juxtaposing The Lighting Of The Menorah To The Inauguration**

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**Numbers And Their Relevance To Existence**

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**When The Natural Is Absolutely Not**

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**Once Consecrated Less Liable To Prosecution**

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**Remove The Impediment To Rightly Position Yourselves**

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# GUARD YOUR TONGUE

A Sefer by  
**The Chafetz Chaim**

A portrait of Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, an elderly man with a white beard and glasses, wearing a dark suit and tie. He is speaking and looking slightly to the right. The background is a simple indoor setting with a framed picture on the wall.

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### A Quantum Leap that Results in Second Place

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1. The 12 Princes inaugurated the Mishkan with gifts and sacrifices over a 12 day period.
2. Moshe had a question: should the order be according to age or travel formation?
3. If it would be birth, Reuvein would be the first; if would be travel formation, Yehuda would be first.
4. It was dictated by G-d that the order should be according to travel.
5. Rashi: Reuvein came with a claim that they should precede Yissachar because they are the first born.
6. G-d said, because Yissachar suggested the gifts and sacrifices in honor of the inauguration, he precedes Reuvein.
7. Another reason: since Yissachar represents Torah, he supersedes Reuvein.
8. Why does the Midrash have to validate Yissachar's position if G-d said the order should be according to travel formation?
9. It was only because Yissachar made the suggestion and represents Torah, did G-d say that it should be according to travel formation.

### Ramchal: Existence As Willed by G-d

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1. All existence is contingent on G-d's continuous Providence, willing that all should be.
2. G-d's essence is not contingent on anything other than Himself.
3. The scope and parameters of all that exists and their systems are only effective to the degree that G-d endowed them.
4. Although in the physical and spiritual realm there are systems and orders, G-d is not bound by any of them because He is the Master.
5. G-d created existence for the sake of good.
6. Evil only exists for man to choose to suppress and negate it.
7. There are many things we witness, experience, and see, which seem contrary to the objective of creation. At the end of time, in retrospect, we will see that it was all for good.

## Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Behaaloscha

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### For My Glory I have Created It

*Torah:* Regarding the *mitzvah* of kindling the lights of *Menorah* by the *Kohen* (priest), "...When you kindle the lamps, toward the face of the *Menorah* shall the seven lamps cast light..."

*Midrash* citing *Yeshaya*: "G-d wants to give you opportunities due to His Righteousness... G-d said to *Moshe*, 'It is not because I need the lights of the mere mortal that I have given you the *mitzvah* to kindle the lights, but rather, to bring you merit.' As it states, 'The light dwells with G-d...' This is to teach us that G-d does not need the light of man. G-d only gave the *mitzvah* of kindling the *Menorah* in order to bring merit to the Jewish people. G-d said to the Jewish people, 'When you kindle the candles you should do it for My Name. If you will do this, you will merit the great light at the end of time.'"

Regarding the burning of sacrifices, the *Torah* states, "It will bring pleasant fragrance for *Hashem*..."

Does G-d need the fragrance from our sacrifices? Does G-d need any of our *mitzvos*, whether it be a positive commandment or a negative commandment? But rather, He gave the Jewish people all of the *mitzvos* to bring them merit and advance their spirituality. If so, why is the *mitzvah* of kindling the lights of the *Menorah* considered unique in this regard?

*Rabbeinu Yonah*: "All *mitzvos* of the *Torah* are the equivalent of appetizers (*parparaos*) to the fear of heaven (*yiras shamayim*)." He explains that the performance of *mitzvos* are an expression of one's fear of G-d. Meaning, that when one performs any *mitzvah* it is only because G-d had commanded him to do so. Thus, the observance of the *Torah* is an expression of one's fear of heaven. The primary *mitzvah* of the *Torah* is to fear heaven, since the purpose of all *mitzvos* are to bring one to this. Although each *mitzvah* demonstrates one's fear of heaven, each one has its own particular effect upon the individual. If G-d does not need the

light of man, then why did G-d command the *Kohen* to kindle the lights of the *menorah* in the sanctuary? It is clear that G-d does not need our light; nevertheless, the *Kohen* only kindles the lights of the *Menorah* because he was commanded by G-d to do so.

Regarding all *mitzvos* of the *Torah*, although when one performs them one demonstrates his fear of heaven, nevertheless, each *mitzvah* has specific spiritual value to the individual. For example, the eating of the matzah on Passover, the observance of the *Shabbos*, and circumcision all address specific areas of one's spirituality in addition to demonstrating one's fear of heaven. However, the kindling of the *Menorah*, specifically addresses the issue of acknowledging G-d's Majesty through illuminating the location of the Divine Presence. Illuminating His location is the ultimate expression of reverence.

*Chazal*: One cannot compare a palace that has sentries that stand and guard its gates to a palace that does not have sentries. There is a commandment that the Levites must stand watch at the various entrances of the Temple and act as sentries. It is obvious that G-d does not need sentries; however, a palace that has sentries at its gates displays a greater level of reverence and respect for the king. Since the Temple is the location of the Divine Presence, it is inappropriate for its location not to have sentries. Similarly, the kindling of the *Menorah* is not to provide light for G-d but rather, since it is His location, it is a display of reverence that His location should be illuminated. Thus, this *mitzvah* is unique because its essence is reverence, which is not so with the other *mitzvos*.

## Humility, a Fundamental Element in Spiritual Growth

*Torah*: Regarding the kindling of the *Menorah*, "And Aaron did so..."

*Ramban*: "This is coming to teach us that Aaron kindled the lights of the *Menorah* himself every day. Although the *mitzvah* was also given to his children, who were also *Kohanim* (Priests) and thus qualified to kindle the *Menorah*, as long as Aaron lived, he was the one to kindle the lights. He was dedicated and expedient in performing this *mitzvah*, which alludes to great things, that contain an unfathomable secret. Aaron chose to perform this *mitzvah* himself every

day as it is alluded to in the verse, 'It should be kindled on the outer part of the curtain (*peroches*), Aaron from evening to morning...' (The verse indicates that although Aaron's children were also qualified to kindle the lights, G-d preferred that Aaron himself should be the one to perform the *mitzvah*). In addition, the *Torah* states, 'Speak to Aaron...' regarding the kindling of the *Menorah* and not 'Speak to Aaron and his sons...'"

*Gemara* in Tractate *Bava Basra*: The illumination of the *Menorah* symbolizes the Oral Law, which is the elucidation of the Written Law. The *Gemara* tells us, that if one wants to attain wisdom he should pray in a southerly direction because the *Menorah*, which was located in the covered sanctuary in the Temple was adjacent to its southern wall.

If one wants to attain wealth, he should pray in a northerly direction because the golden table and the showbread (*shulchan*) were located on the northern wall. The table is the vessel that represents the table of royalty. Thus, all of the Divine Assistance that the Jewish people need to process the Oral Law to fully elucidate the Written Law is activated with the kindling of the lights of the *Menorah*. In order for this *mitzvah* to be fulfilled on the most advanced level, G-d wanted Aaron and not his children to be the one to kindle the *Menorah*.

*Chazal*: "The *Torah* was given to those who ate of the Manna."

*Midrash*: When the Jewish people entered into the Land of Israel each tribe received their portion in the Land and were thus preoccupied with their agricultural responsibilities. In contrast, when they were in the desert, their only focus was on spiritual matters since G-d provided them with all of their physical needs. They were fully immersed in *Torah* study, without any degree of distraction. Thus, the desert period was necessary to establish and set the *Torah* in place so that it should be internalized by the Jewish people until the end of time.

In order for the Jewish people to establish the *Torah* at the most advanced level, they needed to draw upon the greatest level of Divine Assistance. This Divine Assistance came from the kindling of the *Menorah*, since it represents the Oral Law. G-d wanted Aaron himself to be the one to kindle the *Menorah*, because of his unique dimension of person. He was the only

one who could bring about the necessary level of Divine Assistance that would allow the Jewish people to fathom, process and internalize the *Torah* at the most advanced level until the end of time.

*Rashi* citing *Sifri*: The verse “And Aaron did so...” means, “This is to tell us the praiseworthiness of Aaron, that he did not deviate.” Seemingly, the kindling of the *Menorah* was not a difficult mitzvah to perform. If this is so, there is no basis for Aaron to have deviated from fulfilling it correctly? When G-d said to Aaron, “Yours (participation) is greater than theirs...” it is possible that Aaron would have experienced some degree of pride because it was only through his kindling that the Jewish people were able to draw upon the Divine Assistance to process the *Torah*.

Even the most devout person would feel a fleeting sense of pride. The *Torah* attests to the greatness of Aaron, that despite his invaluable contribution through the kindling of the *Menorah*, because of his unique degree of humility he was not affected whatsoever. If he would have had sense of pride (even at the most minimal level), it would have been considered a deficiency in the mitzvah of the kindling. Thus, it would have been considered to be a deviation. His kindling would have brought about a limited result.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Taanis*: One of the liquids to which the *Torah* is compared to is water. Just as water flows from an elevated location to a lower one where it accumulates, so too can the *Torah* only be acquired and retained by the one who has a humble spirit. The greater the degree of one’s humility the greater is one’s capacity to fathom and retain the *Torah*.

Since the characteristic of humility is a prerequisite for coming upon the truth of *Torah* and retaining it, so too the one who is most qualified to activate the forces of Divine Assistance to allow the Jewish people to process and fathom the truth of *Torah*, must not sense any degree of pride. Because Aaron was endowed with a unique dimension of humility, the kindling of the *Menorah* did not allow him to experience even the slightest degree of pride. Therefore, the Jewish people were the greatest beneficiaries of Divine Assistance to come upon the truth of *Torah*. Thus, Aaron chose to be the one to kindle the *Menorah* throughout the forty-year period in the desert and not his sons.

## The Innate Value of the Jewish People

*Torah*: Regarding the initiation of the Levites to become the attendants of G-d, “Then I assigned the Levites to be presented to Aaron and his sons from among the Children of Israel to perform the service for the Children of Israel in the Tent of the Meeting and to provide atonement for the Children of Israel, so that there will not be a plague among the Children of Israel when the Children of Israel approach the Sanctuary.”

*Rashi* citing the *Midrash*: The appellation “Children of Israel” is mentioned five times in the verse to indicate the great love that G-d has for the Jewish people.

*Midrash*: When one mentions the name of one’s child it evokes the special love of the parent for the child. This is the reason the parent prefers to refer to the child by name and not with a pronoun. The *Midrash* continues, “The reason the appellation ‘Children of Israel’ is repeated five times in the verse it is to correspond to the Five Books of the *Torah*.” What is the relevance of the mention of “Children of Israel” five times in the verse and the Five Books of the *Torah*?

The *Torah* is revealing that the basis for G-d’s special love for the Jewish people, who are considered by G-d to be the equivalent of His firstborn child, is because of their relevance to the *Torah*. As the verse states in the Portion of *Re’eh*, “Moshe said to the Jewish people, ‘You are children to Hashem, your G-d...’” Just as a parent loves his child, so too does G-d love the Jewish people. The Jewish people merited this unique and special love, because they are the only nation that has the spiritual capacity to address the objective of existence through their study and observance of the *Torah*. As it states, “For My Glory I created it (existence).” It is only the Jewish people who can bring glory to G-d by adhering to His Will and perfecting themselves through the observance of the *Torah*.

King David in *Psalms*: “*Olam chesed yibaneh*, The world was created with Kindness (*Chesed*).” Nothing existed before Creation. Therefore, there was no reason to create existence because G-d was not indebted to bring it about. Therefore, the basis for His Willing existence emanates His Kindness. Creation is the location for one to perfect himself spiritually as prescribed by G-d and thus merit the ultimate reward to be qualified to cleave to the Creator.

*Torah*: “*Bereishis bara Elokeem...– In the beginning G-d created...*”

*Rashi* citing *Chazal*: “The word ‘*Bereishis*’ should be interpreted to mean ‘It is for the sake of ‘*reishis* (the choicest)’ that G-d created existence, which is for the sake of *Torah* itself that is referred to as ‘*reishis*.’ The Jewish people are also referred to and classified as ‘*reishis*’...” The primary purpose of Creation is to be a setting for the fulfillment of the *Torah*. In addition, G-d also created existence for the sake of the Jewish people, because they are the only nation qualified to perfect themselves by adhering to all the precepts of the *Torah*. Therefore G-d demonstrates His special love for the Jewish people by referring to them as “Children of Israel” five times in the verse to reveal that the basis for His love for them is their unique capacity to fulfill the Five Books of the *Torah*.

When *Moshe* asked G-d to reveal His Glory to him, G-d said, “My Glory will pass over you...” *Moshe* then requested from G-d, “You should separate the Jewish people from other nations...” Meaning, that G-d will only have a relationship with the Jewish people and no other nation until the end of time. Why did *Moshe* make such a request? One would think that since G-d is the Creator of all existence and nations, He would have a relationship with all of them. *Moshe* requested that G-d should have a special relationship only with the Jewish people because he wanted to guarantee the eternity of the Jewish people.

Since the objective of Creation is the fulfillment of the *Torah*, if the Jewish people were taken in a bond which cannot be broken because they are the only people who can live within the context of *Torah*, their existence is guaranteed. However, if G-d would be able to terminate His relationship with the Jewish people and have a relationship with another nation, then their existence would not be permanent. Because G-d acquiesced to *Moshe*’s request, the Jewish people assumed a guaranteed level of eternity since it is only they who have relevance to the Five Books of the *Torah* and its fulfillment.

## Seeking Spiritual Advancement

*Torah*: “The people took to seeking complaints (*misonanim*)...”

*Rashi*: The “complaints (*misonanim*)” that were expressed by the people had no basis, but rather, they wanted to find fault with G-d. The *Torah* continues, “The rabble that was among them cultivated a desire, and the Children of Israel also wept once more and said, ‘Who will feed us meat? We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge...” The *Torah* tells us that the Jewish people had no shortage of meat because they had flocks and herds in addition to the tribes of *Reuvain* and *Gad* who had enormous flocks and herds. If so what was the basis for their complaint?

*Sfas Emmes*: The verse “cultivated a desire” to mean that they wanted to develop a craving for meat in order to create a context of a spiritual challenge. In order to establish a context of free choice. If one wants to advance spiritually, one must confront challenges in which he will exercise his free choice to overcome the challenge.

*Mishna* in Ethics of our Fathers: “The greater the pain/challenge, the greater the reward.” When one is able to succeed in overcoming a great challenge it is a demonstration of one’s dedication to G-d. In the desert the Jewish people were engulfed in a supernatural environment. They were surrounded by the Clouds of Glory, they ate the Manna and were given water to drink from the wellspring of *Miriam*. Although they were physical beings, their environment was not a physical setting that caused challenges.

Thus, they did not have a context to lust or desire anything physical or to express that aspect of a human being because G-d had provided everything for them in a spiritualized setting. It was the equivalent of *Adam* and *Chava* in the Garden of Eden. Since the Jewish people existed in a supernatural setting in the desert that was free from challenges that needed to be overcome, they wanted G-d to provide them with an opportunity to engage their physical senses to be challenged in order to advance their spirituality.

The meaning of their “cultivated a desire” is that the Jewish people wanted G-d to provide them with meat so that they should have a setting of desire that they would be challenged to take control. In so doing, they would be able to advance and actualize their spirituality. Their complaint was not that they had a desire but rather they wanted to be given a desire so that they could grow spiritually.

*Sfas Emmes*: That this was a mistake because it is G-d who brings challenges upon the individual and not the individual bringing challenges upon himself. When G-d challenges the individual, He presents him with a context that he is definitely able to succeed in because otherwise it would not be a true test. However, when one subjects himself to a self-imposed challenge it is not possible to know if he would be able to succeed. A challenge is a challenge only if one has the potential to succeed. Thus, G-d is the only One who can bring challenges (tests) upon an individual. Therefore, the perspective of the Jewish people was flawed and incorrect.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Kesubos*: *Chananya, Meshael, and Azaria* were cast into a fiery kiln because they refused to bow to the image of *Nebuchadnezzar* (Babylonian Emperor) and were cast into a fiery kiln. They miraculously emerged from the fire.

*Gemara*: Had they been beaten rather than thrown into the fiery kiln, they would have succumbed and ultimately bowed to the idol.

*Tosfos*: "How is it possible to say that if they would have been beaten they would have bowed down to the idol. Idolatry is one of the three cardinal sins for which one must give his life. How could they have bowed down to the image rather than chose death?" The image was not truly idolatry but rather it was to glorify the emperor. Therefore, had they been beaten they would have succumbed and bowed.

*Rabbi Y.I. Rudderman z'tl (Rosh Yeshivah Neir Israel)* citing *Chasam Sofer*: The *Gemara* does not mean to say that if factually they would have been beaten they would have bowed, but rather, the *Gemara* is indicating that they did not have the capacity to sustain the pain of being beaten. Therefore, G-d did not subject them to the test because it would have been overwhelming for them and thus not a test. We are able to draw from this that whenever one is confronted by a test of life that is not self-induced, one must know with certainty that he has the ability to overcome the challenge. If not, then G-d would not have presented him with the challenge.

## Perceiving Moshe Through the Mishkan

*Torah*: "It was on the day that *Moshe* finished erecting the Tabernacle..."

*Midrash*: "If *Betzalel, Ahaliav, and all those who were endowed with a wise heart who built the Mishkan, why does the verse only attribute the completion of the Mishkan to Moshe?*"

*Chazal*: The only one who was able to actually erect the *Mishkan* was *Moshe*, because it was humanly impossible to lift the beams because of their weight. It was only because G-d gave *Moshe* special Divine Assistance, that he was able to erect the *Mishkan*. Therefore, although *Betzalel* and all those with a wise heart were involved in the building of the *Mishkan*, it would have had no value had *Moshe* not erected it. Thus, the *Mishkan* assumed its value only due to *Moshe's* involvement and no one else's. Therefore, the *Mishkan* is identified with *Moshe*.

Although it is true that the *Mishkan* would have functioned as a *Mishkan* had *Moshe* not erected it; however, since *Betzalel, Ahaliav, and all those endowed with a wise heart* were responsible for the building of every aspect of the *Mishkan*, one would think that they should be mentioned regarding the value of their participation. Why were they not mentioned or acknowledged in any way?

*Chazal*: The *Mishkan* only identifies with *Moshe* because he was the only one who sacrificed himself for its sake. *Moshe* was involved in every aspect of the building of the *Mishkan*. He wanted to ensure that every form that was incorporated into it was exactly as the form that G-d had revealed to him at Sinai. He instructed all of them exactly what to do. Although it is true that the *Mishkan* could not have been built without *Moshe's* involvement and instruction in every aspect of it, why is the contribution of *Bezalel* and all those involved with the building of the *Mishkan* not even worth mentioning?

*Torah*: At the conclusion of the first day of creation, "And there was evening and there was morning, one day (*yom echad*)."  
After the second day of creation the *Torah* states, "And there was evening and there was morning, a second day (*yom sheini*)."

*Rashi* citing *Chazal*: "According to the order of counting of the days of creation, if the second day is referred to as "*yom sheini* – second day" and the third day is referred to as "*yom shlishi* – third day" and so on, the first day of creation should have been referred to as "*yom rishon* – first day." However, the *Torah* refers to the first day of creation as "*yom echad* – one day."

*Rashi* citing the *Midrash*: On the first day of creation, G-d was the only spiritual entity in existence. The angels were only created on the second day. Thus, the *Torah* refers to the first day of creation as “yom echad - day one” rather than “yom rishon – first day” to indicate that G-d was the only One in existence.

*Maharal of Prague*: Until the angels were created, there was no question pertaining to the “unity/oneness” of G-d. It was only after the creation of the various echelons of angels (each one with a distinct dimension of being), that the obviousness of G-d’s unity became less clear.

*Midrash*: When *Adam* was created, he radiated with such a degree of holiness that the angels confused his radiance with that of G-d. Thus, anything that has a semblance to G-d’s holiness, causes a diminishment of perception of reality of His Unity. Identically regarding the completion of the *Mishkan*, if *Moshe*’s name is the only one associated with it and all of its aspects, one is able to appreciate his sacrifice and involvement. If anyone else such as *Betzalel*, *Ahaliav*, and the wise of heart would have been acknowledged, *Moshe*’s participation would have been diminished. Therefore they are not mentioned.



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