

NO MODIFICATION NECESSARY

by Rabbi Dovid Green

G-d told Moshe "Speak to Aharon...when you light the candles the seven lights should shine facing the center of the menorah. And so Aharon did...like G-d commanded Moshe (Numbers 8:2-3)." Rashi, the famous medieval commentary, remarks that "this tells the praise of Aharon, because he did not change, or modify." What if he had modified? He would be ignoring the mitzvah, or commandment he was given. He wouldn't just be undeserving of praise, he would be liable. Yet, we consider it praiseworthy that he didn't modify? The commentaries address this in various ways, as follows.

One explanation is that even though Aharon did not hear this himself from G-d, and he heard it from his younger brother, he still did the commandment with the same attention to detail as if he had heard it from G-d. This takes great fortitude. Human nature sometimes dictates to drag one's feet in such a circumstance as hearing the orders from a middleman, and a younger sibling at that.

Another approach refers to the freshness with which Aharon performed the mitzvah (commandment). Even though he did it routinely for many years, he didn't change. It means that he performed the act with the same enthusiasm as he had on the very first day.

Lastly, there is an interpretation which addresses the soul of the act of lighting the menorah. It is based on the midrashic statement that when G-d created the world (Genesis 1) the Torah uses the expression "and it was so." However, when light was created on the first day of creation, it does not say "and it was so," rather, "and it was light." The midrash states that "and it was so" indicates that aspect of the creation having been founded and established. The light was not established in its original form, because G-d knew that evil people would exist in the world, and He didn't want them to benefit from this heavenly light. G-d therefore stored it away as a reward for later. (Keep in mind that light was created before the sun, the moon, and the stars.) This is why the Torah omits "and it was so." It is because it was not "so," as it was when it was created. In other words, the existence of evil caused a modification in the establishment of light.

When the Torah describes Aharon's act of lighting the Menorah it states "and Aharon did '**So**'." Rashi again, remarks "to tell the praise of Aharon, that he did not modify." This means that the purity of Aharon's intent was such that he didn't cause the change that evil caused. Evil caused the "and it was so" regarding the light to be modified. Aharon did "**So**." Which "so" did he do? The "so" which was originally held back by the existence of evil. When he made light upon the Menorah, he created a light which was that of the original light of the creation. He didn't cause the "and it was so" to be

modified. He succeeded in accessing the light of the 1st day of creation.

We can gain insight from these three approaches into what is praiseworthy in the performance of mitzvos (commandments): attention to detail, consistence coupled with enthusiasm, and purity of intent. "This teaches us the praise of Aharon, that he didn't modify."

Good Shabbos!

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