

DAILY PREPARATION

by Rabbi Label Lam

And HASHEM spoke to Moshe saying, 'Speak to Aaron and say to him', "When you kindle the lamps, towards the face of the Menorah shall the seven lamps cast light." (Bamidbar 8:1-2)

When you kindle: Why was the passage dealing with the kindling of the Menorah put next to the passage dealing with the contribution and offerings of the princes? Because when Aaron saw the inauguration of the princes he felt badly because neither he nor his tribe (Levi) was with them in the inauguration. The Holy One Blessed is He said to him, "I swear by your life that your role is greater than theirs for you kindle and prepare the lamps!" (Rashi)

Why was Aaron feeling so down about his tribe's lack of participation in the inauguration? From a puerile perspective we can appreciate the dynamics of jealousy, but from when considering the greatness of Aaron the High Priest, the brother of Moshe, a superior spiritual specimen, how does it make sense? Somehow Aaron is meant to be consoled that his contribution is greater than theirs. This too sounds awfully infantile to the untutored ear. Who cares whether or not somebody else's gift was bigger or better than another!?

When Rashi describes the nature of that service which is greater than the others, it looks like the order of activities is backwards. First it speaks of kindling then it talks about preparing the lamps. Isn't the action done in the other way? First prepare the candles and then light them! Why is it listed the other way around?

Let us imagine that a certain Yeshiva makes a huge and elegant dinner to honor the dedication of their brand new building. Many dignitaries and honored guests assemble to dine on the finest of culinary delights and to revel in the aura of well orchestrated rhetorical oratory. Many masterful speeches are delivered to shower the generous donors with well deserved honors. The room wakes up with applause and laughter time and time again.

Ornate awards, artwork, and trophies are presented to each of the honorees in proportion to the measure of their magnanimity. Everyone is granted a special honor scroll for a keepsake and door prizes to remember the special occasion are distributed.

After the all the grandiose festivities one table filled with the teachers and the students of the Yeshiva is noticeably quiet. They were conspicuously absent from the program and they had been the recipients of zero verbal or material attention that evening. The Master of Ceremonies then

approaches that group and sensing their sense of dislocation from the festivities reminds them, "Now that the building has been dedicated and the fixed costs of doing business have been put in place, now that the dinner and the fanfare is over, your daily role as lifetime teachers and learners takes over."

It's not that Aaron was honored with lighting the Menorah once and that his was his swipe at glory. No! His job and the job of the Kohen- class was a teaching job. It's not done with one major speech, or a single swing of the bat. Rather every day requires new preparation and rededication to the constancy of the cause.

Aaron was anxious to make a contribution. He was perhaps concerned about the phenomenon known as the "edifice complex", that the correct values had been exchanged and overwhelmed by the grandeur of the building itself. Now, it might be taking on more significance than the purpose for which it was originally intended. Then a real and true internal memo was sent to Aaron and to us for all time. Learning and teaching Torah may not seem as glorious as other activities but it certainly makes all the others worthwhile, and the secret of success is not in the fanfare of the lighting but in the gritty and quiet trenches of daily preparation. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).