LET

by Rabbi Naftali Reich

This week's Torah portion begins with the mitzvah that Aharon was given in the Mishkan, to prepare and kindle the Menorah. The word "be'haaloshcha," meaning "when you bring up the lights," requires clarification. What was Aharon commanded to bring up? Rashi in his commentary brings two seemingly divergent interpretations. Rashi tells us that Aharon was instructed to hold the flame near the wick he was kindling until the flame was fully ignited and was burning brightly. In his second interpretation, Rashi tells us that the expression "when you bring up" is referring not to the flame but to Aharons's ascent in performing the act of kindling. He was to ascend a platform that was positioned before the Menorah and was thus able to easily reach each of the lights as he kindled them.

These two interpretations of "be'haalosacha" do not seem to go hand in hand. First Rashi tells us that the 'going up' refers to the flame, whereby Aharon was to ensure that the flame itself is fully developed before he turned away. The second interpretation however, tells us that the focus is Aharon's physical ascent.

The commentaries explain that in essence, the two interpretations complement one another. The flame of the Menorah symbolizes the light of Hashem's presence in the world that is reflected in His Torah and Mitzvos. Aharon's responsibility, like that of every father, was to be a lamp lighter; to ignite the flame of love, devotion and passion for Torah and Mitzvos in the hearts of the Jewish people. Yet this task can only be accomplished when he himself serves as the ultimate role model; when he himself is ascending and in growth mode.

How effective could he be in inspiring the hearts of others with the light of Torah if he himself is not in the process of spiritual ascent!

This theme is echoed in the fascinating Haftorah that we read last week, in which the parents of the future savior of the Jewish people, Shimshon, were instructed in how to raise him in holiness as a nazir. Although the angel had given specific instructions to Shimshon's mother, his father, Manoach, was nevertheless perplexed and prayed that the angel should return to teach the parents precisely how to bring up the child. The angel reappears and once again instructs them with the laws of nezirus, saying "everything that I commanded her, you shall guard".

The commentaries are perplexed as to why it was necessary for Manoach to beseech Hashem that the angels return. Surely the instructions regarding how they should rear their son as a nazir were

explicit and absolutely clear the first time around. The commentaries explain that they were asking for guidance in how to raise their newborn infant with the goal of imbue in him such a lofty level of holiness. Perhaps, they too, needed to achieve a higher level of sanctity.

The angel confirmed their reasoning, saying that Manoach, too, should assume the nazarite vow in order to make sure that the child would see his father practice what he preached. Only then would the father be successful in imparting to his child the sacred values that himself espoused.

In our own lives, it is pointless to try to instill values in our children that we ourselves make no attempt to practice. We too, must be in constant growth mode, for our children's finely attuned antennas will quickly grasp if we are operating a double standard-prodding them to achieve what we ourselves fail to strive for. Rather we much teach them in the most potent way possible - by our own example. Only then can we hope to reap the nachas of seeing them fulfill - and even exceed - our highest expectations.

Wishing you a wonderful Shabbos.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Naftali Reich

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