

SHARE THE LIGHT

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

"Speak to Aharon and say to him: 'when you light the lamps, towards the face of the Menorah shall you light the seven lamps.'" [8:2]

We begin our reading this week with the Commandment to light the Menorah in the Tabernacle. As my teacher Rabbi Asher Z. Rubenstein pointed out, G-d doesn't need our candles. He doesn't need our light.

In an ordinary house, the windows are narrowest on the outside. Because of the way light radiates, this method of construction allows the maximum amount of light to enter the house through the window.

In the Holy Temple, on the other hand, the design was just the opposite -- the windows were narrowest on the inside. This allowed the internal light of the Temple to radiate outwards.

So G-d doesn't need our light -- what He wants, however, is for Israel to participate, for Israel to be engaged in the act of lighting. Yet, what does this symbolize?

The answer may be found in Proverbs (20:27): "The light of HaShem is the soul of man" [Ner HaShem Nishmas Adam]. G-d does not need our light, but He offers us the opportunity to radiate light. And we are to be involved with the lighting.

This applies, said Rav Rubenstein, not only to ourselves. If we find a "candle" which isn't burning, it is our obligation to light it. If we find a Jewish soul which is not shining, we cannot leave it dim.

Torah enlightens the mind and gives joy to the heart. A person may be "dim" because he or she is unhappy, or lacking the shine of Jewish spiritual life. One way or the other, we must participate by sharing light. One candle can light thousands of others -- if it is, itself, burning brightly.

Here too, G-d does not "need" our help. He alone can light the lights. But He wants us to be involved in the lighting. We -- every one of us -- has the opportunity to share, and to grow brighter along with others. G-d gives us not merely a place under the lights -- He gives us the opportunity to radiate on our own, and to help others to shine as well.

Let us participate in lighting Menorahs, all around us!