

PROPORTIONAL LIGHTS

by Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein

You [Moshe] shall command the Bnei Yisrael that they shall take for you pure, pressed oil for illumination...

Meshech Chochmah: We read last week about the chief *kelim* of the *mishkan*. They included a *menorah* and a *shulchan*. The *mishkan* served as a model for other central places of *avodah*, including both *batei mikdash*. Thus, both of them also contained a *shulchan* and a *menorah*.

At least the second one did. Shlomo's, however, had multiple *menorahs* and multiple *shulchanos*. This begs for an explanation. If increasing the number was such a good idea, why did we revert to the single *menorah* model for the second *bais hamikdash*?

An answer may begin with our *pasuk*. Why do the people take the oil specifically for Moshe, as implied by the words "for you?" The mitzvah was not given only to him. Why is its purpose or benefit linked to him? We might find an answer in the position of the Ibn Ezra regarding the times at which HKBH spoke to Moshe.

We are aware of the limitation that Chazal put on Hashem's availability to Moshe. This experience, they say, was a daytime phenomenon. Hashem did not speak to Moseh at night. The ibn Ezra, however, does not see this as linked to the time of day so much as to the presence of light. When the night is well-illuminated through lamps, Hashem would speak to Moshe as surely as He did during ordinary daylight hours. For Moshe, then, the light of the *menorah* had great meaning and purpose, which was not shared by anyone else. Man's mind is clearer when he is surrounded by light, which puts him in a better, more joyous mood. *Simchah* is a precondition to any kind of prophecy. Thus, the *menorah's* light enabled him to engage in direct conversation with HKBH during the times when natural light was unavailable.

After the death of Moshe, the *menorah's* light served no direct purpose as a provider of physical illumination – not to Hashem, and not to anyone else. Rather, Chazal^[2] tell us that it offered testimony to the rest of the world that the Divine Presence was comfortable resting with the Jewish people. When G-d cherished them, the *ner maaravi* burned the entire day, after the other lamps had already gone out. This was a powerful statement by Hashem that He resided, as it were, with His people.

Assuming that after the death of Moshe the *menorah's* function became entirely bound up with

representing the *kavod* of the *Shechinah*, we can understand Shlomo's decision – at least according to the opinion^[3] that both the extra *menoros* and *shulchanos* were fully functional.^[4] The *mishkan*'s dimensions were 10x30x10 *amos*, for a total of 3000 cubic *amos*. Shlomo's *heichal*, however, was 20x60x30, or 36000 cubic *amos*, twelve times the volume of the *mishkan*. If one menorah sufficed for the much smaller structure, twelve would be needed to represent the *kavod* of the much greater space filled by the Divine Presence!

In fact, Shlomo did not bring the number to twelve. He added ten of his own, to yield a total of only eleven. He did this to retain symmetry. The ten he added formed two groups of five; each group was placed to one side or another of Moshe's *menorah*. Had Shlomo insisted on full proportionality, he would have been forced to place five on one side and six on the other, leaving the arrangement unbalanced.

In the *avodah* of the *shulchan*, we find that the Torah insists that it be "opposite" the menorah. From this Shlomo understood the link between *menorah* and *shulchan*. It followed that each additional menorah that Shlomo provided had to be associated with an additional *shulchan*.

All of this thinking was mooted by the destruction of Shlomo's *beis hamikdosh*. The second *bayis* would not know of the open display of Divine Presence of the first. There would be no need for extra *menoros* or extra *shulchanos*. The configuration reverted to the essential design dictated by the original *mishkan*.

^[1] Based on Meshech Chochmah, Shemos 27:20

^[2] Shabbos 22B

^[3] Menachos 99A

^[4] Other opinions have it that the extra *kelim* were set in place, but not used, or that all were used, but only one at a time.