

# IN LIGHT OF CONTINUITY

*by Rabbi Pinchas Winston*

## Friday Night:

G-d spoke to Moshe, saying, "Speak to Aharon and tell him, when you light the candles ..." (Bamidbar 8:1-2)

Most of us may never have asked a single question as to why the mitzvah to light the Menorah is found here, at the beginning of this week's parshah. However, all the Torah commentators do just the opposite: they are intrigued by the appearance of this mitzvah at this point in the Torah.

Rashi and the Ramban are concerned more about the juxtaposition of the Menorah and the Chanukas HaNesi'im -- the dedication offerings of the princes at the end of the previous parshah. Rashi, relying on the Midrash, surfaces a story from behind the story, relating how Aharon HaKohen had felt 'left out' of the dedication service, since neither he nor his tribe had participated. The Menorah, says Rashi, was his consolation for this.

The Ramban agrees with Rashi that there is something to be learned here from the juxtaposition of sections, and that is the consolation of Aharon HaKohen. However, he disagrees as to what that consolation was, instead deducing that the real solace was an allusion to the future holiday of the re-dedication of the Temple and Menorah, Chanukah.

The Rashbam, Rashi's grandson, does not focus on Aharon HaKohen's sense of lacking at this special moment in Jewish history. Rather, instead, he focuses on the nature of the mitzvah itself, pointing out that while all other 'melachos' (creative activities for the construction) of the Mishkan had come to a conclusion, the mitzvah to light the Menorah was continuous. That is why, says the Rashbam, the Torah waited until the end to speak about it.

Thus, the mitzvah and reality of the Menorah is continuity, Jewish continuity, and the purity necessary to accomplish and maintain that continuity. That is why it is quite logical that the purification and inauguration ceremony of the Levi'im, of whom we have already said also represents that same continuity, follows the parshah about the Menorah.

However, it is a continuity that does not only mean keeping the Jewish people alive from generation to generation, part, one that also represents a spiritual bridge between the everyday world of nature, and, the supernatural reality that governs all aspects of daily life.

Hence, as the Talmud points out (Shabbos 22b), a great miracle occurred with the western lamp of the Menorah: it burned for a much longer period of time than its oil should have NATURALLY allowed it to. This was proof, says the Talmud, that the Divine Presence resided with the Jewish nation.

The Menorah of the Bais HaMikdosh only had seven branches, unlike our chanukiah which has eight. Seven is a number that always alludes to the every day physical world; eight is a number that alludes to the supernatural world. However, the western lamp, because it burned supernaturally, was like the eighth candle on the chanukiah, symbolizing the spiritual bridge between the 'natural' and 'supernatural' worlds, and the CONTINUOUS flow of light that must be maintained between the two worlds if we are to survive spiritually, and then, physically.

This is really the underlying concept of the mitzvah of 'pirsumi nissa,' the proclamation of the miracle associated with lighting the Menorah of Chanukah. On one hand, 'pirsumi nissa' means making it known to others that a great miracle happened for the Jewish during the days of t he Chashmonai. However, more importantly, it is a 'glimpse' into the inner, miraculous workings of creation on the every day level -- a peak at the hand of G-d WITHIN nature.

It is THIS that is the basis of Jewish continuity. As we have been forewarned:

If you walk contrary (b'keri) to Me, and will not long to listen to Me I will bring seven times more plagues upon you ... (Vayikra 26:21)

The word 'b'keri' represents just the opposite of 'pirsumi nissa.' It is, instead, the covering up of the miracle of life, a 'cold' (kar) view towards Hashgochah Pratis (Divine Providence):

Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you left Egypt; he confronted you along the way (kor'cha b'derech) ... (Devarim 25:17-18)

CONFRONTED YOU ALONG THE WAY: It can mean 'happening' ... or it can mean 'cold and hot,' as in, he cooled you down when you were 'hot' (i.e., confident and devoted to G-d) ... (Rashi)

For, as Amalek and Hitler, and just about every anti-Semite has proven, nothing threatens Jewish continuity more than when Jews 'cool down' with respect to Divine Providence. It is the light of the Menorah that they come to extinguish, and which we, as believing Jews, must be self-sacrificing to keep burning.

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## Shabbos Day:

*When you blow a series of short notes a second time, then the southward camp will march. When they blow a series of short notes it is to signal the time to travel. (Bamidbar 10:6)*

WHEN THEY BLOW ... IT IS TIME TO TRAVEL: I have already explained in the section of "Speak to the kohanim" (Parashas Emor) that the blowing (t'ruah) was to allude to the Trait of Judgment ... (Ramban)

Travelling is a time of vulnerability, and therefore, increased danger. Aside from all the strangers one is subjected to along the way, there are additional needs to tend to, and even the fulfillment of basic needs becomes more complicated when removed from one's normal, secure environment, for, one becomes more dependent upon others for help. Being 'on the road' now as I write this d'var Torah, I am acutely aware of just how true this is.

Therefore, travelling is a time of increased demand for Divine Providence, which, in turn, triggers Divine judgment. Whether we realize it or not, we are asking for additional help from G-d just to survive and succeed while in transit. Even something as basic as collecting your luggage from the conveyor belt evokes prayers such as, "G-d, please let my luggage be there and not on some plane to the Far East, or still back at my place of origin!"

I don't remember how many times I thank G-d when I see my luggage at the same destination at which I have arrived, but I don't it is plenty. And, as I stood there anxious, and on stand-by because of my flight was either overbooked or cancelled, someone looking closely might have noticed my lips uttering a silent prayer to G-d to get me on that flight, especially when I had to speak in two hours time at the new destination (it really happened, and I was the LAST one to get a seat on the flight!).

This is what the Mishnah means when it says:

If one is walking along the road and breaks from his learning to say, "How nice this tree is..." he is responsible for his life. (Pirkei Avos 3:7)

For, travelling is a time of 'din,' of Divine judgment, of when Heaven opens up our file and asks, "Does this person warrant such additional help?" What we are doing at the time can either work in our favor, or against us, depending upon how favorable an activity it is in the eyes of G-d.

Thus, Yosef told his brothers before they departed to Canaan with the news of his survival:

He sent away his brothers and they left, and he told them, "Don't squabble along the way." (Bereishis 45:24)

It wasn't just an issue of keeping the peace, but one of keeping them all in one piece, for, journeying brings out the Attribute of Justice. This is true in EVERY generation, regardless of how smooth the roads are today, and how many police patrol the highways, for, the Accusing Angel has a large repertoire of methods for carrying out judgment that may be coming one's way. Thus we say 'Tefillas HaDerech,' the 'Prayer for the Way,' before embarking on a journey.

This idea, of course, can be applied in a broader, more philosophical sense to ALL of life, which is a 'journey' in and of itself, from the day of birth until the day of death. Thus, 'safe' is a relative concept, and even when we feel stationary and 'at home,' we are still only sojourners who constantly require

merit and help from Heaven.

That is why we Jews should constantly be making blessings, learning Torah, and doing acts of kindness for others. It is not just an issue of finding favor in the eyes of others and winning popularity contests. It is about justifying all the help we can get from Heaven in order that our souls can 'pass through' this world of judgment and come out safely on the other side.

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### **SEUDAH SHLISHI:**

*Moshe heard the nation crying with their families by the entrance of their tents. This made G-d very angry and it was evil to Moshe. Moshe complained to G-d, "Why have You mistreated me like this Did I do something to anger You that You have given me such a burden?" (Bamidbar 11:10-11)*

This is certainly an unusual occurrence in the Torah, where Moshe expresses his frustration over leading the stubborn Jewish people. Some might ask, "But this is the great Moshe Rabbeinu! How could he slip up like this?" Others might ask, "What took him so long?!"

However, the truth is, even in Moshe's frustration, there is what to learn. You'll notice that Moshe blames G-d for the Jewish people's insolence, acknowledging that, even though each and every one of them has free-will, still, their behavior is a function of Hashgochah Pratis -- Divine Providence.

This raises all kinds of questions about the interaction of free-will and Divine Providence, such as, if G-d is 'manipulating' the events of our lives, then, what difference does our free will make?

A not-so-complicated version of the answer is the following. Imagine you are the producer of a new film-to-be. You have written the screen play, and now you are casting the characters to play each of the roles of the movie so you can begin the filming. The given is that the characters of the plot have been decided and laid out in detail; the unknown or variable is which real-life person will play which part.

Furthermore, who you choose for the main part will have an impact on who you choose for the rest of the roles. Each human being is unique, and every actor has his or her own way of interpreting his or her part. You want actors who are compatible with each other, who can 'mesh' their abilities to give reality to the story.

Whether or not a particular actor will want his part, or be eligible for the part, will depend upon who he is at the time of the casting for the role, which will be a function of all his free-will choices until that time.

Such is life in the real world. G-d is THE Script-Writer of all history, in as much as there is a Master Plan for creation which he has designed. It is a complex script, with a cast of trillions, and it takes place over thousands of years. Who gets what role will depend upon where the person is at the time

of casting -- a function of all his or her free-will choices to date.

Only, you may not know at the time that you're playing any role at all, especially if you do not believe in or are out of touch with G-d's Master Plan. If a good thing happens to you, you may ascribe it to 'good luck.' If you are victimized, you will be resentful and angry at whomever crossed you. If you do good for another, you may take all the credit for itself, and, if you harm another, you may only feel apologetic.

All the players in your part of the 'script' may seem to be there merely by chance.

Not for Moshe Rabbeinu. He was focussed. He knew that whatever was going on down Here was the result of what G-d had 'written' up There. And, he understood that his role was based upon where he was holding at any given moment in time, which affected where the Jewish people were holding at the time.

And THAT was the basis of his complaint. Taking in the big picture, it did not make sense to him that he should have to suffer the Jewish people as much as he did, at least as a function of his own actions. And, he was right, for sometimes we go through what we do as a stage of preparation for a change of history, in this case, the 'sharing' of prophecy amongst the seventy chosen prophets.

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## **MELAVE MALKAH:**

### History And Beyond: Part Two

One of the most important concepts to know is that there was a radical transformation in man as a result of the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Disobeying the command of G-d to not eat resulted in a spiritual 'distancing' of G-d from man, intense 'hester panim,' which, in turn resulted in the 'physicalization' of mankind and creation.

For, according to the Zohar, prior to the sin of eating, Man was such a spiritual being that his skin was translucent like light ('Kesones Ohr,' spelled: aleph-vav-raish). Our skin today, is quite solid and opaque ('Kesones Ohr,' spelled, 'ayin-vav-raish), which limits our ability to rise above nature and act as spiritually as one made in the image of G-d ought to behave.

Though this 'physicalized' state of man suits our period of history, it is unacceptable for higher spiritual planes, especially that of the World-to-Come. Therefore, before anyone can enter that ultimate phase of history, one must reverse the process and return back once again to the state of being that Adam HaRishon first enjoyed before everything went wrong. We will have to be re-built again without any of the effects of interacting with the snake and the sin that followed.

The period of 're-building' is called 'Techiyas HaMeisim' -- 'Resurrection of the Dead' -- which we even mention in the 'Shemonah Esrai' prayer everyday, even on Shabbos and holidays. This period of time will be specifically for dying, decomposing in the ground (as part of the atonement process),

and then, being re-built anew on a much higher spiritual plane. If you were to see yourself of then today, you'd think you were looking at an angel.

Though many think that this period of history will not occur for a long time to come, in truth, the Zohar (Midrash Ne'elam, Parashas Toldos 140a), and the 'Leshem Shevo v'Achlamah' (Drushei Olam HaTohu, 2:4:12:9-12) say that this period will begin no later than 210 years in advance of Year 6000 -- 29 years from the date of this writing (exclamation mark).

For us, that is hard to believe. Twenty-nine years is not a lot of time, and the transformation from THIS reality to THAT reality is unimaginable. However, that is probably only for our generation, which did not witness how Europe and the entire world was transformed literally 'overnight,' over a short period of four years.

Furthermore, when G-d is directly involved in such transformations, then, they can take place in even shorter periods of time, like the ten months it took to bring the Jews from the lowest rung in Egypt to the highest one, and, to devastate the once-powerful country of Egypt.

However, says the Talmud (Brochos 13a), the Final Redemption will outdo all previous redemptions, and the Leshem says that once that happens, everything will change at breath-taking speed. By the time history hits Year 5790, the world may still resemble what it looked like in the past, but, at the same time, will look and feel very different. 'Paradise' will not be something dreamed about then, but lived within.

"Okay," so you say. "So, let's say that the Zohar is to be taken literally, and that, in twenty-nine years time, the wonderful world of resurrection DOES begin, now what? After all, a lot can happen in twenty-nine years time too ... What do we do now -- business as usual until that mysterious time?"

What about Moshiach?

"Yeah, what ABOUT Moshiach? Where does HE fit into all of this, or does he just show up at the last minute, you know, right before the new, pure bodies start making their way back onto the stage of life?"

It's a good question. There's an even better answer, and it is 'Kibbutz Golios' and 'Yemos HaMoshiach' -- and the topic 'Part Three.'

Have a great Shabbos,  
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