

# YOURS IS GREATER THAN THEIRS

*by Rabbi Yissocher Frand*

## Parshas Behaaloscha

### Yours Is Greater Than Theirs

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 552 - Kavod Sefer Torah Vs Kavod Talmid Chochom. Good Shabbos!

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At the beginning of the parsha, Rashi explains the linkage between the end of Parshas Nasso (dealing with the offerings of the Princes of the twelve tribes) and the beginning of Parshas Beha'aloscha (dealing with the kindling of the Menorah in the Mishkan).

"Because when Aaron saw the inauguration of the Princes, he felt badly about it, for neither he nor his tribe was with them in the inauguration. The Holy One Blessed is He, said to him, 'By your life! Your role is greater than theirs, for you kindle and prepare the lamps.'" [Rashi on Bamidbar 8:2]

The Ramban asks why G-d attempted to console Aaron with the mitzvah of lighting the Menorah rather than with the twice daily offering of the incense that is praised by the pasuk in Zos HaBracha "they shall put incense before Thee" [Devorim 33:10]? Alternatively, why wasn't Aaron told that as his "consolation prize" for not participating with the other Princes, he was going to be allowed to enter the Holy of Holies (on Yom Kippur), a privilege shared by no other human being?

The Ramban therefore suggests (based on a Medrash) that the consolation offered to Aaron was not the fact that the High Priest would kindle the Menorah daily during the duration of the Temple Service (both during the time of the Mishkan and during the time of the Beis HaMikdash). Rather, the consolation was that the Menorah would be kindled in all generations as a result of the heroism of Aaron's descendants, the Hashmonean Priests. In other words, the consolation alludes to the Chanukah Menorah that will continue to be lit, even subsequent to the suspension of the Temple Service.

This Medrash is saying that there are times in life when we do things in a non-dramatic fashion

without a lot of fanfare, but those little things can last for generations, for centuries, even for millennia. Other times, we do things with great fanfare and great pomp and circumstance but those things are forgotten shortly and have no lasting importance.

The sacrifices of the Princes were offered with great pomp and circumstance, but they were a one time affair, and it was only for the Mishkan. The Mishkan was eventually put away and the whole dedication ceremony had no permanent impact. Aaron's kindling of the Menorah was not only for now, not only for later, but for eternity.

I saw an interesting story that highlights the teaching of this Medrash.

Rav Shlomo Heimann, zt"l, was a Rosh Yeshiva in Yeshivas Torah V'Daath during the 1930s and 1940s. When he used to say a shiur, he said it with such enthusiasm and excitement that when he finished saying the shiur he dripped with perspiration. One wintry day, there was a big snowstorm in New York and very few students showed up. Rav Shlomo Heimann had 4 students in his classroom. Despite the fact that 80 or 90 percent of his students were not there that day, Rav Heimann said the shiur with the same fervor and vitality as any other day.

Midway into the lecture one of the boys interrupted and said "Rebbi, there are only 4 guys here today. You do not need to shout so loud!" The Rebbi looked at his student and said "There are not four guys here. One day each of you will be Rebbeim or Roshei Yeshiva. You in turn will have students who will themselves have students. I am giving shiur to you and to your students and to your students' students and to your students' students' students! So why shouldn't I say the shiur as if I were saying it to at least 100 students. I am not saying it only to 100 students. I am saying it to thousands of students!

This is the meaning of the Ramban. When Aaron lit the Menorah, he was not just lighting the Menorah in the Mishkan. He was lighting the Menorah that Jews all over the world would be lighting for thousands of years -- even under dire circumstances.

Numerous books recounting heroism during the holocaust have classic stories of fulfillment of the mitzvah of kindling Chanukah lights under the most trying of situations. In the horror of the concentration camps, people took shoe polish and peeled out potatoes to create makeshift oil and menorahs. This all stems from the dedication of Aaron's kindling of the Menorah.

"Yours is greater than theirs" because your action will set the pattern for millions of menorah kindling ceremonies over thousands of years into the future.

This is how we need to think sometimes. We may think that what we are doing is miniscule and small and without permanence. But, who knows? Who knows what can come out of one small act. This is the consolation of "Yours is greater than theirs."

## **Rabbis Are Always Subject To Criticism**

Rav Elya Meir Bloch has a very interesting insight at the end of the Parsha.

Moshe Rabbeinu uttered a very short prayer for his sister Miriam after she was stricken with leprosy: "Please, G-d, heal her now." [Bamidbar 12:13]. Rashi asks why was it that Moshe did not offer a lengthier prayer? Rav Elya Meir Bloch gives two answers. First he suggests that it was so that Israel not say: "his sister is ill and he is standing praying a great deal." Rashi's second answer is that Moshe did not offer a long prayer for Miriam so that Israel not say: "For his sister he prays at length, but for us he does not pray at length."

Rav Elya Meir asks that the two answers of Rashi seem to contradict one another. Which is it? Was Moshe opening himself up to criticism because his davening was too short or was he opening himself to criticism because his davening was too long? Was the complaint that he cared too little about his sister or was the complaint that he cared too much about his sister?

This, Rav Elya Meir says, is a prototype example of the fact that the Rav of a congregation can do nothing right. He is always subject to complaints and criticism regardless of what he does. Prays too short? Criticism. Prays too long? Criticism.

The Rabbi can never buy the right car. If he drives a nice new shiny car, the Baale Batim complain he is too flashy. If he drives a Yeshivashe jalopy, the Baale Batim complain that their rabbi is a schlepper.

This is the nature of Klal Yisrael. This is the consequence of being in a position of authority over the Jewish people. To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, a rabbi can please some of the people some of the time, but he can not please all of the people all of the time. If one is a Rav I don't believe it is possible to even please all the people any of the time.

In light of the strict halachic requirements to give honor to Talmidei Chachomim (perhaps even surpassing the honor due to a Sefer Torah), this is very inappropriate. Congregants should not complain about their rabbis. Rabbis are only human, they try their best.

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Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington.

Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Yerushalayim.