

# CONTRADICTIONARY DESCRIPTIONS AS TO HOW THE MENORAH WAS MADE

*by Rabbi Yissocher Frand*

## Parshas Terumah

### Contradictory Descriptions As To How The Menorah Was Made

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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 #494: Bima in the Center of the Shul. Good Shabbos!

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The Torah's narration of the construction of the Menorah includes: "You shall make a Menorah of pure gold, beaten out, shall the Menorah be made (tei-a-seh haMenora), its base, its branch, its goblets, its knobs, and its flowers shall be hammered from it." [Shemos 25:31]. Rashi comments on the passive conjugation (niph'al) of the word "tei-a-seh". By other Mishkan utensils, the Torah uses the more expected conjugation "t-a-she" (you shall make). Why in the case of the Menorah does the Torah use the passive form, "tei-a-seh"?

Rashi says this teaches that the Menorah was made "by itself" (i.e. - not by human hand). Moshe had difficulty envisioning exactly how it was to be constructed. Therefore, Hashem instructed him to throw the block of gold into the fire and the Menorah would emerge miraculously by itself.

Several pasukim [verses] later, at the conclusion of the instructions regarding the Menorah the pasuk [verse] says: "See, and construct, according to their form that you are shown on the mountain." [Shemos 25:40] Rashi comments: "Moshe was perplexed by the construction of the Menorah until the Holy One, Blessed is He, showed him a Menorah of fire."

These two Rashis seem to contradict one another. What in fact happened? How was the Menorah made? Did Moshe see it, get the blueprint and make it himself, as the latter Rashi says -- or did it miraculously emerge from the fire by itself? Was it "ta'a'seh" or was it "tei-a-seh"?

The Sefas Emes resolves the apparent contradiction. Both teachings are correct. Moshe Rabbeinu could not figure out how to make the Menorah. The Ribono shel Olam said to him "This is what it

looks like. Here is the diagram. Go do it." (Shemos 25:40), However, after Moshe tried to construct the Menorah from the diagram, he returned to the Almighty and said: "I can't do it." At that point Hashem said, "Okay, fine. Take the gold, throw it in the fire, and out will come the Menorah."

But that raises the question, why didn't Hashem just help Moshe complete the task the first time? When He saw that Moshe Rabbeinu was having difficulty with the concept of how to construct the Menorah, why didn't HaShem immediately have him throw the gold in the fire? Why did HaShem frustrate him further going through a process that proved in the end to be futile?

The Sefas Emes explains that this is the paradigm for spirituality and acquisition of all Torah knowledge. Torah and ruchniyus [spirituality] is all about the process of acquisition. The process of trying at first and perhaps not succeeding is an essential part of the end result of acquiring Torah and ruchniyus. Success -- when it comes at the end -- is always "miraculous".

The Menorah is the symbol of Torah. Sometimes it seems overwhelming. How does a person master it? A person has no idea how he will ever accomplish what he has set out to accomplish. The answer is that we must try to put it all together. After we make the effort, the end result often "emerges by itself". About this it is stated: "If you make the effort and achieve, believe it!" After working, and sweating, and making the maximum effort then what comes is a "find" (metziah).

Regarding Torah learning and matters of the spirit, we first need to engage in the "ta-a-seh". We need to make the effort. After showing sincere effort, as Moshe did with the Menorah, it will be achieved, as it were, via a "tei-a-seh" process.

If a person fails to make the effort, there will never be an end result -- miraculous or otherwise.

I believe I once heard the following parable from Rav Gifter. A King promised great reward to anyone who would climb a ladder and reach the top of a certain tower. The problem was that the ladder was at a 90 degree angle, and the top of the ladder was still several feet away from the top floor to which the climber had to ascend. There was no way that a person could climb the ladder, get to the top rung and then get up to the floor at the top of the tower.

The King insisted that people wear a certain helmet while climbing the ladder. The climb was difficult. People would get a third of the way up the ladder, half way up, look up and ask themselves "What am I doing even trying? It is hopeless." One after another, they would give up trying.

One determined fellow decided that he was going to give it a shot. He climbed higher and higher and higher. He sweated and toiled endlessly until he got to the top rung of the ladder. When he got there, he realized why everyone had to wear the helmet. The top of the helmet was magnetized. On the top floor was a powerful magnet. As soon as he reached the top rung, the magnet pulled him up "magically" the rest of the way.

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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Teruma are provided below:

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