

TRY TRY AGAIN

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

"And you shall make candelabra of pure gold; from a solid piece of gold it shall be made..." Shemot 25:31

In this week's Torah portion Hashem instructs Moshe to construct a beautiful edifice as the Tabernacle to house the holy vessels that represented his connection to the people of Israel. Amongst the holy utensils was seven-stemmed candelabra called the Menorah. Moshe was instructed to take a solid piece of pure gold and to form the candelabra which contained stems, cups, flowers and ornaments. The commentators, however, see a grammatical problem with this particular command. The verse begins and "you" shall make. The verse continues, and "it shall be made". Why, they ask, change from the active tense to the passive?

Each one of the holy vessels in the tabernacle represented a distinct aspect of Jewish life. The altar, for example represented prayer or service to God. The table, represented sustenance. The candelabra represented knowledge and Torah study. Many people acknowledge that their earnings are determined by Hashem in Heaven. Others feel, and rightly so, that Hashem expects them to be the ones to initiate prayer. All agree that one who does not study will not be able to acquire Torah knowledge. By the same token, they feel that if they do put in effort they will become wise. This, however, may not be totally true.

Rabbi Noah Weinberg was visiting the United States of America. He spent one Shabbat in a small New Jersey community. The people were friendly, and because of the small size of the congregation for Rabbi mingled freely with all the congregants. On Shabbat afternoon, when they sat to eat Seudah Shelisheet, the third Shabbat meal, a young man who was sitting next to the Rabbi began a conversation, which expressed his frustration with his ability to learn Torah. The young man described the many hours in the many techniques he had tried in order to grasp the difficult concepts of the Talmud study.

"How come I just can't get it?" he asked. "No matter what I do, it seems my conclusions are wrong when I get a chance to review with my Rabbi. I am about to give up," he said he reported.

"That is the worst solution, you could choose" the rabbi responded. "A person has to understand that the learning of Torah is not something that a human being can do without the help of Hashem. Hashem expects you to put in all the effort you can, and then he will produce the results."

The young man listened and was encouraged. The respect he had for the sage gave him the

strength to continue with his suggestion off try try again. Not long after he made a breakthrough. He reached a level where he was able to prepare a portion of the Talmud on his own. Today that young man is a practicing Rabbi in his community teaching others how to learn and how to be patient, if at first they do not succeed.

Our sages teach that creating the candelabra of one piece of gold was something that Moshe found very difficult and almost impossible to comprehend. Hashem's response to his puzzlement was to tell him "You do yours and I will do the rest".

When one sits to learn the concepts and ideas that are contained in the Torah, Hashem expects a person to put in its maximum effort. The concepts themselves, however, are impossible for the human being to understand on his own. Just as construction of the candelabra, which represented Torah study, was impossible for Moshe to comprehend yet Hashem said to him putting your efforts and I will complete it- so too is the learning of Torah. The verse cited above goes from active tense to passive tense to show that all you do, you must do to the fullest extent but don't expect to complete the job on your own. Holy work gets done only through the help of Heaven. May it be the will of Hashem that we all have the strength to put in all of our efforts to grow in spirituality and in Torah knowledge and may He bless us with successful achievement of those goals - Amen.

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